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EXAMPLES OF SAN BERNARDINO OF SIENA

Siena

EXAMPLES OF SAN BERNARDINO

CHOSEN BY ADA HARRISON

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT AUSTIN

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SAN BERNARDINO OF SIENA

SAN BERNARDINO OF SIENA

By ADA HARRISON

Bernardino in his Times

AMONG THE GORGEOUS AND dramatic figures of the Italian fifteenth century, Bernardino of Siena takes a modest place. A Franciscan monk, a preacher, he was the author not of cataclysms nor of works of art but of a number of simple sermons delivered in the vernacular to the common people of his day. Yet notwithstanding the gentleness of his assault upon it, he achieved immortality, and for two sufficient reasons; the first that his sermons possess a humorous, direct and ingenuous literary quality that is entirely their own, and the second that, being preached primarily for the edification of the vulgar and simple-minded, and reflecting most accurately their point of view, they constitute a rarely honest and valuable historic document.

Bernardino's lifetime, from 1380-1444, was the famous and magnificent period of the early Renaissance, a period of extreme activity and vigour, civil, artistic, and above all belligerent. It witnessed a great and rapid development in the power and independence of the city states, and consequently incessant wars and rivalries between them, as well as the devastating

faction feuds that raged within the boundaries of the communes themselves. It witnessed also the lusty splendours of the early renaissance of art and the humanistic revival of letters. All this profusely explored period Bernardino succeeds in presenting from a new angle, since he reflected it from the humanitarian, almost the proletarian viewpoint. What, in his times, affected the lives of the common people is uppermost in his sermons. The glory that history retrospectively ascribes to his days is not particularly apparent, for the life of the palace is what reflects contemporary magnificence rather than the life of the fields, the Piazza and the little shops. He speaks often of war, which touched the cities more than once in every lifetime, and of the plague, a hideously familiar visitant, and continually of party strife, which brooded permanently in all the cities like a domestic curse; but of the spectacular glories of the Renaissance little enough. He does, it is true, often refer in a charming and homely way to the pictures with which Simone Martini and the splendid early Sienese artists were beginning to decorate their city—pictures and frescoes were something that the people could see and understand—but of letters he says nothing, for the simple and sufficient reason that all books were sealed books to his listeners, none of whom could read. He spoke to an audience engaged in the practical business of life—in

working with the hands, buying, selling, housing themselves and finding daily food. They were a class touched more by the calamities than by the elegancies of existence. War would leave their fields untilled and their hearths empty; the sonnets of Petrarch and the rediscovered glories of Plato would not be likely to affect them for many generations.

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What does emerge, however, from the pages of S. Bernardino is a complete and illuminating procession of the types common to his day. There seems to have been no rank of society with which he failed to come in contact, and practically none which he did not, in his sermons, allude to or describe. Princes, paupers, widows, shopkeepers, priests, soldiers, mothers-in-law, farmers, housewives, innkeepers, magistrates, courtesans, tailors, bachelors and medical men he knew not only as units of society, but intimately and with specialised understanding. And he preached to them according to their occupations and their kind. The company parading through the pages of his sermons bears strong resemblance to that troop, about forty years more modern, that set out one spring morning to Canterbury from the Tabard Inn; and although Bernardino's outlook may be a little less heartily secular than Chaucer's, his people are at least equally human and natural and number among them just as many of the assorted types it takes to make a common world.

BERNARDINO'S GENEALOGY was of the family of the Albizzeschi—Sienese, but the saint was born at Massa, as his father was governor of that city for Siena. 1380, the date of his birth, was the very year in which the great St Catherine of Siena died, so that Bernardino

followed immediately in a most exalted succession. But actually he had little in common with Catherine. She, in her ecstatic fervours and flaming rages of righteousness, touched earth but seldom. Bernardino had both feet planted steadily upon it for most of his days. His parents died while he was still a young child, and he was brought up by relatives, first at Massa and then by two aunts and a cousin at Siena. It must have been

a particularly happy household, for the three women were devoted to the boy, and he returned their affection. Under their roof he had opportunity to develop his taſte for reading, which was a passion with him. He read with avidity letters, philosophy, theology, and the Bible. But he remained throughout a natural boy—a creature of cheerful high spirits on whom the house depended for its entertainment. As he grew older and more thoughtful he did not change; he continued to joke, even about solemn things. He was a natural Franciscan, and when he turned definitely towards the Church he was able to embrace religion with a light heart, as Francis would have had his followers do, and accept God not with lugubrious solemnity but smiling.

There is a ſtory of how he teased his cousin Tobia, who had warned him gravely on the subject of women, with the profession, in the true chivalric ſtyle: 'You muſt know I am in love with a moſt noble lady. I would gladly give my life for her. If I were a day without seeing her I would not close an eye at night.' Later, the curious and anxious Tobia wrung from him the information that the lady lived 'outside Porta Camollia,' and, yielding one day to her curiosity and anxiety, followed him, to find him kneeling ecſtatically before the Virgin of Simone Martini painted above the Camollia gate. This was entirely in the spirit of

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Francis and his Bride; only Bernardino loved the Virgin in her picture more ingenuously and less mystically, in the way in which it is natural to love an exquisite painting that gathers into a concrete image the abstract loveliness of an ideal.

Almost from the beginning Bernardino was sensible of a vocation. When he was twenty years old he went through an ordeal, a perilous novitiate, in his service during the plague, which visited Siena (for the fourth time in fifty years) in 1400. Youth as he was, he took upon himself the care of the entire hospital, and not only the administration but all the most painful and repulsive duties. His example fired other youths to help him, and many died at their posts, but he remained immune and magnificent during the four years of the pestilence. Afterwards, when it had passed, he himself was struck down, but he recovered after a grave illness, and in 1403 he took his vows. He had waited so long because of Tobia. She was blind and old and alone and he would not leave her, but when she died he felt himself free to follow his choice.

From this point onwards, he had as it were two religious careers, that of Franciscan and that of preacher—careers which naturally were for himself indissolubly linked, but which can, in retrospect, be viewed apart. He began to preach in 1417, when he was thirty-seven years old, and continued with only

short intermissions until he died. From 1417-1438, for more than twenty years on end that is, he would deliver his sermons as often as he humanly could, taking immense journeys from town to town, enduring every hardship and fatigue in order to arrive and give his message where he thought it was most needed. All the cities of northern and central Italy from Milan to Orvieto knew and welcomed him. He must have spent the greater part of those twenty years in actual travelling, for he went always on foot, and would never hear of any horse or carriage to help him combat his exhaustion. No matter how weary he arrived at his destination, he was always ready to mount into the pulpit as long as he had breath. Preaching was a supreme passion and delight to him; it was his instrument, and he could not bear the thought of relinquishing it or leaving it unused. 'I have borne this burden of preaching,' he said once towards the end of his life, 'already for many years, and I find it the loveliest and most blessed burden that I ever yet bore. I have wanted to let everything else go for it. I have not wanted to hear the confessions of either man or woman, nor to be taken up by any other duty than this sowing the seed of the word of God.'

It was a life of tremendous hardships, demanding a constant and prodigious output of energy. When an interval of rest and refreshment was inevitable,

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Bernardino used to retire to the convent of Capriola, now called the Osservanza, at Siena, juſt as Francis, in his day, had to take refuge in the Carceri above Assisi. Life at the Osservanza was considerably more normal and rational than that of the Carceri, which explains probably why Bernardino, refreshed by his short visits there, managed to live until the age of sixty-four, while Francis died, worn out, at forty. To Bernardino the convent was a haven in an exhauſting world, and he loved it accordingly. It was his in a peculiar sense, as he had actually helped to build it with his own hands, carrying the ſtones and mixing the mortar for the masons. It ſtands on a little hill juſt about a mile from Siena, looking back across a slope of olives and a cultivated valley to where the city lies ſtraggling upon her own long hill, behind great pinky-red brick walls. In Bernardino's early days there was nothing but a hermitage on the spot, and the ſtory is, that once, passing there with a company of people, so great a desire seized the young monk to preach, that he jumped up into an olive tree and began haranguing his audience from between its boughs. They were inclined for a moment to think him crazy, but were soon compelled to attention and amazement by his words. The hermitage had belonged to the Ospedale della Scala who had gladly surrendered it to Bernardino at his requeſt, and there the Osservanza, the convent of

his especial followers, began to rise. Here Bernardino had the opportunity to occupy himself in ſtudy, which was a relaxation to him in the midſt of his unremitting practical life. Here he read, wrote and polished up his sermons, both those which had been written in Latin and those which had been spoken in the vernacular, for naturally they were all given to the world in the scholar's tongue.

The Osservanza had only one drawback, namely that it was juſt a little too near Siena. A spot rather more remote from the city would have secured for the saint a far greater measure of peace. For the Sienese adored S. Bernardino, both as a prieſt, a father, and a kind of domeſtic magician. He was approachable, familiar, and according to them omnipotent. They were convinced that the solution of none of their difficulties was beyond him. And with the Osservanza so near at hand nothing was easier than to go and pour their troubles into his ear. A mile was juſt a pleasant country walk, and they were always sure of a welcome. Bernardino, in one of his sermons, amusingly describes their importunities. There were times, he said, when he was by himself, when he wanted to roar with laughter at the things they came to ask him. 'Sometimes,' he said, 'when I am alone, there comes to me such a desire to laugh that if no one were within hearing I would laugh so that it would be

a marvel. For I find that nobody has any kind of disagreement with anybody else but he appears at my elbow with: O Brother Bernardino, I pray you for the love of God do me a favour. There is a quarrel between So-and-So and Such-and-Such, and you would do great good by bringing them together again .... In the same way if a son is driven out by a father, he comes to me, or if a father is ill-treated by a son he comes; if a wife is badly used by her husband she comes, or if a man is sick he comes, or if another is in trouble he comes, and upon my word, I hear from you the strangest rigmaroles I ever heard anywhere. People come to me who want to tell their troubles all in one breath, and they begin a thousand miles from the starting-point!' But though he joked about it, he found the constant pestering a decided nuisance, for his little intervals were very precious to him; wherefore he tried, without much success, to teach his flock consideration. 'One man is for one thing,' he said, 'and another for another, so when you need the help of the bishop don't come to me, because I can do nothing. And when you need the advice of the judges, there again don't come to me, because there again I can't help you. This I tell you all, because your coming to me is simply a loss of time. I want to study and read and make a great long sermon to the honour and glory of God, and you come and take me away from

my work and make me ſtop and liſten to your ſtories!'

In 1438 Bernardino was compelled to relax his activities as a preacher. He had to lay down that 'beſt and moſt blessed burden' to take up one of those other duties that his soul loved less. For he had risen to great power and authority in his Order, and was compelled to occupy himself with the work of adminiſtration—ruling, advising, and settling disputes, as well as more firmly eſtablishing the Order and building houses for it. The period following 1438, a time of unceasing mental wear and tear, aged him greatly, for though the physical hardships were less than those of his itinerant life, the pleasure and satisfaction were less also.

In 1444, attacked by gout and rheumatism and the diseases natural to his age and the rigorous life he had imposed upon himself, he felt a sudden call to go preaching again, and set off north to Milan, where he felt himself needed to combat a heresy. On this journey, since walking had become an impossibility, he consented reluctantly to beſtride an ass. The only other occasion on which he had travelled at any expense save that of his own legs was when the Emperor Sigismund, having been in Siena, and having liſtened with deepest appreciation to Bernardino's sermons, invited the saint to accompany him to Rome.

Bernardino, out of courtesy, consented to go as far as the borders of Tuscany, riding among the gaudy train on an ass, and looking, according to an eyewitness, 'much as if he were being led to torture,' so painful was it for him to be identified with any display of pomp and worldliness. After he left Milan he went preaching through all the neighbouring cities. At Padua he delivered sixty sermons—these in a rather more complicated and ſtudious ſtyle than was usual with him, because the University was among his audience, and he knew when a little display of depth and subtlety would not come amiss. From Padua he went to Vicenza, Verona, Venice, Ferrara and Florence, preaching wherever he ſtopped. After the ſtresses of this tour he was obliged to return to the Osservanza to reſt and to refresh his powers, but while he was there the death of a certain Brother Vicenzo, especially dear to him, seemed to bring him a presage that his own time was at hand, and nothing would satisfy him but he muſt ſtart on a final round of preaching while there was yet time. His friends tried to dissuade him, but he put their pleas aside. 'I well know that I am old,' he confessed, 'and little fitted to support the toil of travel, but love spurs me on, and compels me not to cease from preaching to the people and from undertaking journeys to this end so long as there is speech left in my tongue.'

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He preached at Massa, and then at Siena, taking leave of his best loved citizens with tenderness and with repeated warnings of the judgment of God at hand. Here, as at Padua, he disappointed the crowds who were waiting to bid him farewell, by slipping secretly out of the wrong gate; and, riding on an ass and accompanied by four of his friars, he set off south. His great wish now, the goal to be reached before death overtook him, was to preach to the people of the Kingdom of Naples. He began to feel guilty of negligence that he had never given them the benefit of his word. Now he travelled towards them by way of Perugia, Assisi, Foligno and the Umbrian cities. At Perugia the citizens, to do him honour, had built him that charming 'pulpit of S. Bernardino' that still adorns the outside of the cathedral, but when he had climbed into it he was too weak to do more than smile down and bless the crowd. Jogging more and more painfully on his donkey and ridiculing all the while this asinine progress, he reached Spoleto, where he preached, and then Rieti, and finally Cittaducale. This was his last sermon and the end of his odyssey. After Rieti his weakness and pain compelled him to dismount from his ass and lie upon the ground. But Aquila, the first city of Naples, was only seven miles distant. He was carried there in a litter, and having been laid at his own wish upon the naked earth, he

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died most tranquilly, with his friars round him and the sound of Vespers in his ears. Aquila and all the country round, both cleric and lay, came with candles and reverent kisses to pay him honour and to assist at his funeral. And like a mundane little postscript to this ecstatic death and glorious translation, the donkey on which he had ridden was driven back to Siena, done to death, and divided (the less perishable parts of it) into strips for relics for the devoted Sienese.

In 1450, six years after his death, S. Bernardino was canonised—an easy candidate for sainthood.

As St Francis is always recognisable in pictorial representations by the Stigmata, the pierced hands and feet, so Bernardino may be identified by the little inscribed tablet that he carried in his hand. All the pictures of him, however, unlike those of Francis, are obviously true likenesses, and not just idealised images of any saint. They all agree in showing him as an old monk in a brown Franciscan frock, with an emaciated wistful face, great tender eyes, and the pinched-in mouth of a man who has lost his teeth. It is a portrait of a man infinitely gentle and spiritual, and among the idealised and indistinguishable holy types that cluster in the canvases of the early Renaissance, it stands out as a portrait of a possible and real human being.

MONG THE INNUMERABLE AND diverse spiritual progeny of St Francis, Bernardino must have been one of the disciples best calculated to rejoice the founder's heart. In Bernardino Francis would have seen as nearly complete a practical application of his rule as was possible. The problem of how best to be a Franciscan was never an easy one. Francis's own way, perfect for himself, was not susceptible of imitation in its entirety. His teaching could be followed literally, but not his example—its rigours and its ecstasies did not come within the compass of common clay. Francis bade his disciples be merry and lift up their voices in song—they were to be the 'minstrels of God'—but there was always something a little other-worldly about his own mirth, which flowed from a body racked by fearful severities and privations. The laughter of Bernardino was entirely more human and natural—it was not only a kind of ineffable merriment at the contemplation of Paradise, it was often something akin to a mere earthly joke. Pure asceticism had no place in his character. Perhaps by 1400 it was already dying out of the age, but Bernardino declared definitely against it. He tells a humorous and delightful story of himself as a youth deciding to be a hermit, buying a goat-skin and a Bible and setting off to choose a likely cave or hollow in which to deposit his equipment and begin his life of

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solitary devotion. He was going to live on herbs, and as a concession to the flesh he was going to begin by picking and washing them, but later, weaning himself of such weakness, he was to eat them unwashed, and finally, having attained the simplicity of the beasts of the field, unpicked. It was his extreme difficulty in swallowing his first piece of sow-thistle that brought the anchorite's career to an end. 'Chew, chew, chew as I would,' he says, 'it would not go down! But,' he continues, becoming suddenly serious, 'this was not election, but pure temptation'; in other words it was the affectation and appearance of holiness and not the thing itself. Undoubtedly, according to Bernardino, the body must be subdued, but only so far as the spirit required. Its chastisement was not an end or an achievement in itself.

All the Franciscan virtues Bernardino possessed in a high degree, but without any trace of self-conscious extravagance. His Franciscanism, having been mystically conceived and understood, was, in addition, judiciously applied, and the result was a harmonious excellence which pervaded all his contacts with his Order.

Bernardino had joined the Franciscans at a time when their state was anything but perfection, and their affairs ripe for improvement. It was therefore inevitable that, with the powers and the enthusiasm that he possessed, he should have a great influence

upon the Order. To understand his place in Franciscanism it is necessary to take a look backward. The Order, in spite of the luminous inspiration of the founder, had never from its inception been anything like a harmonious whole; and disagreements had existed in it even before Francis's death. The original

Rule had been that the monks should accept the vow of poverty in its final literalness, and should not even possess the convents in which they lived. A certain Brother Elias, one of Francis's personal disciples, had been the first to insist upon the impracticability of this, and had begun at once the casuistic business of reconciling Franciscanism and the world. It was he who built the magnificent memorial church of

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S. Francesco at Assisi, which filled Brother Leo and his friends with outraged sorrow at the thought of their humble and world-despising master being made the pivot of so much pomp. Under Leo and Elias the Order definitely divided. Elias's followers, who wished to possess their religious houses and accept ecclesiastical offices, were known as the Conventuals, and the rest, a minority, as the Spirituals or Zelanti. The gulf between the parties grew, the Zelanti becoming more and more impossible in the Conventuals' eyes, for they openly rebelled against the Vicar-General of the Order and began to attach themselves to certain heresies. Finally they reached the point of divinising the person of Francis and regarding his writings and injunctions as a Third Testament. This was the crisis of the struggle. Though the Zelanti had had in the beginning spiritual right and reason on their side, their last extravagance destroyed them. They could not now continue in the number of Frairs, nor yet as an orthodox religious Order.

Now from the disruptive and over-fervid elements of the Zelanti a small third party began to grow—a modest band whose wish was merely to be allowed to practise in peace what they considered pure Franciscanism. They were of the same seed as the Zelanti, but altogether milder in ambition and tone. They did not begin with wishing to reform the Order or humanity,

but merely to retire to a convent near Foligno and *observe*, according to their own notions, which were sufficiently rigorous, the Franciscan rule. The new party was called the Osservanti, and by both the remnant of the Zelanti and by the Conventuals was left in peace, for neither wished to alienate it and so drive it into the other camp. Bernardino, who had joined the Conventuals on taking his vows, forsook them almost immediately for the Osservanti, and began that affectionate labour for them that lasted throughout his life. The little Order had almost immediately begun to thrive. It was a practical and uncontroversial solution of Franciscanism, and was accepted gladly. The number of the Friars increased by leaps and bounds, and they were able to build new houses, of which Bernardino's Osservanza at Siena was one and was naturally chosen as headquarters. Important advisory offices were given to them, and they were entrusted with the care of the Sepulchres of the Holy Land. Bernardino refers to this last office in one of his anecdotes, which he prefaces in the time-honoured fashion with an assurance that it is a very good one, and quite new, confided to him direct by 'one of our Order' who was a sacristan in the Holy Land. In 1438 Bernardino was made Vicar-General of the Osservanti, and was obliged, as has been said, to sacrifice his preaching to their advancement. But

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whatever his reluctance to undertake it, the work he accomplished in that sphere was as lasting and important as it could have been in any other.

The rise of the Osservanti to power and consequence had meanwhile thoroughly alienated other Orders, who began to look for a likely point at which to attack Bernardino as the responsible head of the upstarts. Pretexts for religious attack and the arcane and cabbalistic methods of impeachment practised in the Middle Ages are not particularly easy to master, but it appears that, in 1427, Bernardino remonstrated against the practises of a certain friar Manfred of Vercelli, who was at that time preaching the coming of the Antichrist and forming his following into a third order of Dominicans, and who immediately retaliated by accusing the saint of initiating an idolatrous cult of the name of Jesus Christ; whereupon Bernardino was hailed to defend himself before Martin V at Rome. The absurd and fantastic charge probably sprang from the little tablet inscribed with the sacred initials surrounded by an aureole, which the saint always carried, and without which he is never seen in pictures. He had an extreme tender adoration for the name Jesus—he found it, as he says, something sweet even to the tongue, and the tablet with the sacred initials was a kind of banner of faith, an outward and visible sign he put before the people to which they

might offer their allegiance. The ſtory is that when he had preached againſt the vice of gambling at Bologna his audience had been moved to make a bonfire of their dice and cards, and, when the smoke from this holy sacrifice of vanities had died down, Bernardino found himself confronted with the out-of-work dice- and card-makers, complaining that they had loſt their means of livelihood. He proposed therefore that they should take to cutting and inscribing his holy tablets, which they did; and by this means they were subsequently able to make a living. At Volterra he had blessed his audience under his sign, and this had probably given rise to the erroneous accusation of ascribing to it holy powers. The charge was carefully laid at Rome. Bernardino remained completely unconcerned, but, remarkable though it seems, he was at one time in lively danger of conviction, and was only saved by the eloquent logic of his own pleading and by the support of a certain Giovanni da Capeſtrano, a fervent disciple of his, who hurried to Rome to his aid. Having triumphantly cleared himself, Bernardino was invited by the now enthusiaſtic Pope and populace to ſtay in the capital. He consented to remain for eighty days, during which time he preached no less than 114 sermons; which, considering that each address is likely to have laſted for several hours, was something

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of a remarkable achievement. He must have had a curious stay at Rome—first suspected and almost condemned as a heretic, and afterwards raised to the highest place in papal and general esteem. He referred succinctly to his experiences at the capital on his return to Siena. 'Of what happened at Rome I shall say nothing except that when I went there everybody wanted me roasted and fried, and that after they had heard the sermons that I preached, then if anybody said a word against me, the worse for him!'

The moment of the triumphant vindication of their beloved priest the Sienese thought a propitious one to petition the Pope to nominate Bernardino Bishop of Siena, since the See was then vacant. Bernardino, however, speedily convinced them that they had reckoned without their host. He had no aspirations to the bishop's throne, and nothing but aversion for the life of worldliness and honours it would entail. As a bishop he would have been bridled, and the efficacy of his preaching practically destroyed. 'If I came here as you wanted me to come, that is as your Bishop,' he said, 'half of my mouth would be shut and locked.' He had that conviction, not uncommon in his times, that the honours of the Church led definitely away from the service of the Church. Later, when speaking of his refusal, he made an even livelier comment on the Church dignitaries of his day. 'I have

never repented of it,' he said; 'I don't want to go to the devil's abode for the sake of your souls!'

In 1432 the undiscouraged followers of Manfred attacked him again, still indignant at his success in Rome and his refusal of the bishopric. By subtle and secret means the accusing process had gone very far at the capital, when the Sienese warned Pope Eugenius IV of the treachery, and he annulled the whole proceedings with a Bull that again triumphantly vindicated Bernardino.

Bernardino bore himself against his calumniators with a serene and cheerful humour. He was capable of completely disregarding their accusations. Sometimes, when he preached against slander, which he did time and again, the memory of his own sufferings may have moved him to a deeper earnestness and passion, but he spoke always without rancour and personal bitterness, and persisted to the end that the man who spoke ill of him did him a greater service than the man who praised him. Indeed he had nothing to fear from his enemies. He won and kept for himself the fame of reorganising and purifying the Franciscan Order, and the progress of the Osservanti, in his lifetime, bore completest testimony to his work. When he joined them their community was only a few hundred strong; at his death they were established in their convents to the number of several thousand.

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THE PICTURE OF BERNARDINO the great cleric, Franciscan, and reviver of his Order, is capable of rousing the grave and studious interest of posterity, but it is the picture of Bernardino preaching at home in the Campo at Siena that actually touches the heart. There in the huge open semicircle of the famous Piazza (one of the loveliest and most remarkable in all Italy with its red brick pavement, its circumference of sturdy and beautiful red Gothic palaces and the splendid Palazzo Pubblico with its soaring, floating tower) he delivered to his best loved congregation his most celebrated and best known sermons. He would stand by the white, much-decorated porch of the great Palazzo, almost under the stem-like tower which served him so often for an illustration in his sermons, and preach for hours on end, or as long as his hearers would stand to listen. These famous Sienese sermons, from which the greater part of the extracts in the following pages are taken, were delivered after Bernardino had returned from Rome, in the Lent of 1427, when he preached for forty-five days on end. By good fortune they have been preserved verbatim and entire, for they were taken down word for word by a certain Maestro Bartolommeo, a tailor, a devoted member of Bernardino's audience, who had invented a personal system of shorthand, which he scratched on to wax tablets and

immediately, on reaching home, transcribed. We have the sermons, therefore, exactly as they were delivered, without any subsequent latinisation or polishing up. Bernardino preached always with one eye on this indefatigable secretary, and often interrupted himself to repeat to him an important passage or to explain a metaphor or a bit of Latin which he thought might be outside a tailor's range.

Bernardino the Preacher

These sermons are of course delivered in the vernacular, and a vernacular of the liveliest, homeliest, almost the slangiest description. The language, that of those who speak to children and very simple people, has a strong onomatopoeic bias, and is occasionally a little baffling at sight. Neither etymology nor a dictionary is of much assistance at an *impasse*, for all the vowels, even in the reputedly stable parts of words, are fluid. The clue to a word's meaning is mostly its position and general appearance, and if these fail, it will usually discover itself on being repeated several times over aloud, with slightly varying pronunciations. For instance, admonishing his audience not only to listen to the sermon but to ponder upon it and digest it afterwards, Bernardino preaches: 'When you go back to your house or shop or vineyard, you must go ruminating. Do you know what that is? It is a kind of spiritual repetition. Do as the ox does when he has eaten. *Ruguma, ruguma, ruguma,* and that is better

than the meal.' *Rugumare* is not traceable in Italian dictionaries, but none the less what an excellent and satisfactory word, describing itself not only by its sound, but equally by the sight of it being said!

The actual words that Bernardino used were always simple in the extreme, the exact expressions that he heard about him. He wanted the application of his sermons to be real; therefore when he said, speaking as he always did, most pointedly in the second person, 'Oh you say this,' or 'You say that,' he was at pains to put into the mouths of the culprits the very words they would have found ready to their tongues. He was anxious that the cap should fit personally, as though made to measure for each one of his hearers.

Bernardino's style is as simple as his language, and equally lively, dramatic and effective. It has the appearance, which is its chief virtue, of being no style at all, but a kind of vivid interlocution, interspersed with anecdotes, dialogues between himself and one of the crowd, and sudden, personal exhortations. It is pervaded by a rare ingenuousness which had probably more art in it than at first appears. The stories are often told, for instance, with what seems a deliberately inartistic repetition and bathos that robs them of any pretensions to literary style, but they were told none the less with just that happiness with which a popular raconteur tells a story. The whole set of sermons is, in

fact, brimming with the vitality that makes all style negligible, and there is no doubt that Bernardino 'got his words across' to his audience with completest success.

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His simplicity is a rare tribute to his sincerity and his determination to preach for the sole good of his hearers and not for a shadow of aesthetic satisfaction of his own. It cannot have been altogether easy for him, for he was a scholar and a natural lover of letters, and the tendency of the preachers of his day was entirely the other way. Preaching in Bernardino's times tended very much in the direction of mere eloquence (a danger at all times near and pressing to Italian speakers, since their *facondia,* their natural and magnificent powers of self-expression, are often apt to preclude them expressing anything but themselves), and there was also growing up a strong humanistic tendency, which in itself was an enemy to simplicity, and often, rather than a servant of matter, a slave to style. These were the days when writers were liable to fall sick and die of literature, and preachers likewise. The pulpit as well as the library dealt with well-turned phrases and Ciceronian periods, and a preacher needed a close grasp upon humanity to be saved.

Bernardino, in this respect, was triumphantly among the elect. He took note of dangerous contemporary tendencies only in so far as was required to ignore them. He tells an amusing anecdote (still

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excellently applicable to-day) of a monk who returned from a sermon protesting that it was the most marvellous thing he ever heard, but revealed after much persuasion that the wonder of the discourse lay in it being so lofty that he had not been able to understand a word. The moral of this, a very urgent one, is that the preacher must go *chiarozo, chiarozo*, an expressive and non-existent word, signifying *chiaro* (clearly) to the *n*th degree. 'Do not make the meaning of your words dark,' says Bernardino elsewhere. 'When you speak, speak out clear and open. Call bread, bread. Express with the tongue what you have in your heart, and speak plainly so that you are understood. Let your Yes be yes, and your No, no.'

It is easy to see that the problem of being a humanist or an anti-humanist (a problem pondered by scholars in connection with Bernardino) simply did not arise for the saint himself. The larger part of his audience were what he calls *donniciole*, silly little women who could not even count their change. To accomplish his particular purpose he had no choice as to the nature of his language. His style, however, and his method of delivery, and above all his humour, were essentially his own, and it was in them that the greater part of his success lay. His personal attraction must certainly have been very great, for the people crowded to hear him, in spite of the fact that he preached the

Lenten sermons at dawn, so as not to interfere with the day's work. It must have needed a preacher of special merits to persuade the people to stand for a couple of hours in the Piazza before beginning their daily labours, especially in the chilly dawns of Lent

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—for with snow on Monte Amiata and an icy wind blowing from the hills, early Spring can be bitterly cold at Siena. It was not all quite plain sailing, even for Bernardino. Sometimes the humble flesh of his audience was weak. There would be dozers or even snorers detected in the crowd, or, worse still, defaulters lured to absence by the superior attractiveness of their beds. Noting any such weaknesses, Bernardino would

interrupt himself in the midſt of his preaching to correct them. He believed in putting right the matter in hand before proceeding into any abstract regions. 'O you woman asleep' would frequently find herself being addressed from the heart of an interrupted harangue, and sometimes he would break off to make an example of somebody. 'I see two women asleep,' he once said, 'side by side, one using the other as a pillow. Oh, I can't bear to see you so. I am like a niggardly innkeeper who sees all his wine running away, and cries: Ah, me, Ah, me! it is all being loſt! These things I am telling you are not things to sleep about.'

It is difficult, in spite of everything, not to feel a certain sympathy for the slumberers. If their duties were as many and as exhauſting as Bernardino himself once detailed in his picture of a good housewife, it is hardly likely that they were at their liveliest for edification at five o'clock in the morning. But it was Lent and Bernardino did not preach to them every day of the year. He had a passionate conviction that they should make the moſt of their double opportunity, that of denying the flesh and, by his words, profiting the spirit. The following snatch of dialogue is another typical interruption:

Bernardino: Woman, go quickly; go and call your husband. Go and call him, I say. *Donna:* Oh, I have

called him. *Bernardino:* I tell you, go. Call him again. *Donna:* And suppose I lose my place? *Bernardino:* No, you won't lose it. There's plenty of room. *Donna:* But I can't get out of the crowd. *Bernardino:* Go and call him, I say. Good; good; now you've done well.

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Very little escaped the preacher's eye. 'Sometimes,' he said, 'by certain signs I know that you're not listening to me with a good will. You twist round your heads. You turn this way and that. You put up your hand to your hair,'—an exact description of a fidgety or inattentive member. The energy he expended while preaching must have been prodigious—talking, talking, talking, introducing anecdotes and tales and always clutching, by main force as it were, at the

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attention of every one of his hearers, passionately unwilling for any member not to hear and profit by it all. Sometimes there would be an interruption, or some rival attraction that would cause the audience to turn its head. Then he would shout: 'O you there, by the fountain, with your wares. Go away and sell them somewhere else. You there by the fountain, you boys selling candles, I'm talking to you.' Or again: 'Throw something at that dog. Drive it away! Throw something at it!'

For the saint adored his preaching. It was life and death to him, infinitely more precious than rubies, and he could not bear that anybody else should not appreciate it too. Always he was exhorting the citizens to come and hear the sermon, especially the women, who were responsible for coming themselves, bringing their children, and getting their husbands and brothers out of bed in time. Everything was to be left aside for the sermon; even, if it came to a point, the Mass was to take second place. And those who absolutely could not come were to have word of it from the others. 'Talk over the sermon with your old mother, if she is ill and cannot come.'

But sometimes, in spite of everything, the saint's efforts would not be sufficiently rewarded. The audience would be small (this one can gather from those times when he laments repeatedly that the women

have not brought their sons and daughters) and sometimes, naturally enough, either weariness or the call of domeſtic duties would cause some of the congregation to ſtir and ruſtle out of their places before the end. Then Bernardino, urgently, almoſt pitifully, would call upon them to ſtay. It would be: 'O you women, keep your places,' or 'Keep ſtill, O you women, do not go away. What is it? What is it? Stay where you are, everybody. Wait for confeſſion before you go. Oh what a bad ſign. What a bad ſign is this! I would rather loſe three pounds of blood than have my diſcourſe broken up like this. I am coming to an end. Stay! Hear the concluſion!'

But these fallings-off were comparatively rare. It is evident that for the moſt part the people came in crowds, as it was natural they ſhould, even deſpite the inconvenience of the hour and the diſcipline of keeping awake and paying attention. For the ſermons were undoubtedly an entertainment, whatever they may have been as a ſpiritual bleſſing. In the days of no books, no theatres, and few popular amuſements, a prieſt coming with news of the outſide world and anecdotes and occaſional tales of ſtrange happenings in foreign lands was certain of an audience. Beſides, the Sienese loved Bernardino for himſelf. He was to them a father, a confeſſor, and a conſtant friend. They honeſtly believed in his word, and perhaps even tried

to keep his commandments. Probably too there was a kind of melancholy enjoyment in having their own sins accurately exposed, and a gloomy importance and satisfaction in hearing themselves personally addressed, time and again, as candidates for Bernardino's 'warm home' and 'devil's abode.'

In the form of his sermons Bernardino made a few concessions to the general manner of his day, but they were not very important ones. He would make himself a kind of armature or plan of campaign in Latin, giving out a Latin text and various headings which he would propose to illuminate, but which he would find tolerably easy to forget in the flow of his discourse. His procedure is rather reminiscent of that of the *Vita Nuova*, in which Dante would write some burning splendid sonnet, and then protest in solemn prose that it was all an illustration for one of his famous amorous abstractions. Bernardino, in the same way, would go off on an inspired and secular flight, and then, bringing himself up short, would gravely and ingenuously protest that it all depended from two or three not too coherent words of a Latin text. He had undoubtedly a self-defined plan of what he was going to preach about and what he was going to say, but the Latin headings, the important-looking and business-like A, B and C do not affect it much. They were probably a concession on the one hand to tradition and on the

other to the popular idea of the amount of incomprehensible and ecclesiastical matter a sermon ought to contain.

Among all the subjects that Bernardino preached on, two lay nearest his heart—one local and contemporary in its application, the other universal and of all time. They were the evils of party faction, and the evils of slander. The first was a subject ripe for any fifteenth-century preacher's conjuration. The faction wars between Guelf and Ghibelline were a kind of perennial super-political struggle, smouldering in all the cities simultaneously, and liable to be prosecuted at any time at the sword's point. Almost every one was involved in them, as almost every one is involved, in a greater or lesser degree, in politics, but their consequences were apt to be mortal. The toll of life and strength these civil wars exacted is illustrated by the fact that the cities of Cortona and S. Gimignano were crippled by the violence of their internal feuds.

Bernardino was never tired of admonishing his hearers on the subject of this fearful and unnecessary evil, and not only admonishing them but threatening them with inevitable damnation if they did not mend. For the party man, of all sinners, he declared there was no hope. He spoke sometimes with bitter irony of the height of folly to which party feeling had reached—there were separate Guelf and Ghibelline

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ways not only of building a house or a tower, but also of slashing a doublet and peeling a peach—but it was a subject which he never approached lightly. He spoke of it always in a solemn and fatal tone: 'Whoever consents to be of the Guelf or Ghibelline party, if he dies of that party, lost is he. Whoever confesses with the mouth to be Guelf or Ghibelline and dies of that faction, damned is he.' Even to lean to one party more than another in the heart without ever confessing it aloud is sufficient cause for damnation. Bernardino never preached more portentous words than on the subject of faction. 'I want you to listen to a prayer this morning that I want to pray for the soul of my mother and my father and all my family: My Lord Jesus Christ, I pray you that if my mother or my father or any of my relations have died belonging to one of these parties of which I speak, I pray you that no mass may ever avail their souls, nor the prayers of anyone be of help to them. And I pray you, O Lord, that if any has held to a party until his death, and has died without confessing it, that a thousand devils may seize his soul, and there never be any redemption for him.'

And again: 'How many evils have come from these factions? How many men have been slain in their own cities, and cut to pieces, and some killed for the revenge of their fathers, and children's brains dashed

out againſt the wall, and the flesh of the enemy sold to the butcher like the flesh of beaſts—yes, and afterwards roaſted and eaten? What do you think of it, women? Yes, and I have heard that there are women too so furious againſt their enemies that they have put the lance in their little son's hand, and sent him to do murder for the revenge of their party.'

These were not bolts shot at random. They were aimed againſt the breaſt of practically everyone who ſtood to hear, and they muſt have raised a shudder in the hearts of women who had seen and known the horrors they described.

Among the domeſtic vices, that of slander and scandal-mongering seemed to Bernardino the moſt vile. He is at his liveliеſt and his moſt characteriſtic in its chaſtisement. Experience had doubtless given him particular underſtanding of it, and he was in a position to describe the slanderer with insight and appreciation. Sometimes he was a frog, giving tongue on the edge of a ditch, but diving below the surface of the water before he could be identified; sometimes he was a mad dog with bloody mouth, and sometimes he was a pariah nosing round a butcher's shop and being received enthusiaſtically by his outcaſt kind. He is not, by a fine effort of juſtice, by any means always a woman. Women are of course adepts at passing on in ſtrieteſt confidence a piece of scandal

they have received on those same terms, until between them they have rapidly provided with a whole illegitimate family any lady touched lightly by the breath of scandal; but men are no less ready to defame than they.

The vices of avarice and vanity, only less reprehensible than that of slander, are, however, rigidly divided between the sexes—the first is peculiar to men and the second to women. No character in all Bernardino's pages is more truly or accurately drawn than the miser. So human is he, that in the very act of delineating his vileness Bernardino almost requires our sympathy for him, especially in that tragic dilemma when he misses some of his savings and does not know whether he has actually been robbed or has merely hidden the money so thoroughly as to baffle even himself, and all the time he dare not betray his torturing anxiety, because secrecy, above all things, is the miser's need; or again, when he comes to his death-bed, and realises that his money bags, the sole things that he loved on earth, have to be left behind.

Preaching on *All things of this world are vanity*, Bernardino again chastises with scorpions. Fine houses, easy living, above all fine clothes, come straight from the devil and lead inevitably back to him. With overpowering vehemence he puts the eternal male case against the vanity of women's clothes. He will not of

course accept the female passion for adornment as a necessity, an instinct to be tempered and held in check. To him it is an active vice, and with

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masculine and monastic ingenuousness he asks why there need be any fashions at all, and why the mothers of fashionably-dressed daughters and the daughters themselves and the tailors that wait upon them cannot all be burnt at the stake together. But if he is masculine

and ingenuous upon the whole issue, he is, as usual, subtle and knowledgeable upon the details. He sketches most accurately the female fashions of his day—the heavy, folded head-dresses, painted faces, high heels, jewellery, elaborately-dressed hair, and the sumptuous gowns with huge hanging sleeves which sweep the ground. These sleeves he fastens on and returns to with peculiar insistence—they are the wings of the devil, they are a criminal waste of cloth and substance, there is enough stuff in a single pair of them to make cloaks for three beggars, and, worst of all, they are so heavy and inconvenient to their wearers that to divide the weight they have them split up and show the *naked arm!* 'Oh, Oh, Oh, the shamelessness of women! Why don't you go naked altogether? Is there nothing that will make you blush?' and so on, and so on, in the very phrases with which we are familiar to the point of weariness on the subject of modern *décolletage*. The subject gives him scope for some splendid little cameos of women. There is the good housewife, that remorseless medieval ideal of industry and patient propagation, the slut who wears her finery to church and slouches about the house in sloth and rags; the mother-in-law, lamenting to her son that now he has brought home one of these new-fangled, fine-lady wives she is set at nought in her own house; the young widow who seems to Bernardino

the vaineſt and moſt worldly member of all female society and attracts his moſt earneſt fulminations upon her frivolous head; the courtesan who is not so much the pattern of evil as the exponent of the fashions; and the bawd, whom he describes in a vigorous image that allows no mercy: 'O vileſt of Chriſtians, you have sold your own flesh and now try to sell the flesh of others. . . . Do you know what the bawd is like? She is like the hen you kill for carnival. You wring its neck and throw it on the ground, and yet it goes flapping as if it couldn't ſtop flying after it was dead. Or like the eel when you cut its head off and it ſtill wriggles. So does the bawd. She is dead, yet she continues to creep and wriggle in her own vile way.'

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The sermons on true charity, no less than those on the vanities, bring much practical wisdom to light. 'Give gladly' is the precept, rather than 'Give much,' and above all do not give in order to cut a philanthropic figure in the world. The rich donors to churches, who give chapels, chalices or altar-cloths with their arms conspicuously emblazoned on them, receive short shrift, and ſtill shorter those hypocritical givers who pretend to ſtand in a dark alley with their alms in order to escape observation but by virtue of their very feigned modeſty contrive to attract more attention than ever to themselves.

On psychical subjects Bernardino is both interesting

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and sound. He advises the women of his audience not to fancy themselves possessors of psychic tendencies, nor to be too ready to believe in the spiritual significance of their dreams. They are to be on their guard also against those who wish to import magic into religion, or to overstress the supernatural. Extravagance must always be avoided; fantastical relics of the saints are bound to be a fraud, and a naked hermit who comes out of a wood protesting that he is going to lead the faithful to Jerusalem on dry land is better in custody than at large. It is interesting, however, to contrast Bernardino's reasonable refutation of astrology with his attitude towards the rest of magic. He was well convinced of the existence of witches and of the diabolical efficacy of the black arts, and he was for taking the most practical measures against them. He points out that the extermination by violence of any suspected witches or wizards is the least a decent community owes to itself. The most satisfactory method, as invented and practised by a certain worthy citizen he mentions, is to trap the suspects in little straw huts and immediately set these on fire. He throws some interesting light on the subject of medicine, which was naturally more of an art than a science in his day, with illustrations of a cheating chemist who makes up an inferior draught and kills his patient, and of the doctor himself, writing out the prescription:

'For So-and-So, Receipt. A dram and a half of this, two drams of that, and so on, to be taken in a little water,' in the apparently immemorial manner. He speaks of nature not overmuch, but beautifully, with characteristic Franciscan feeling; but animals he seems to have observed, rather than loved or pitied. In using as an image the captive swallow, or the cow who weeps to see the butcher slay her calf before her eyes, he does not, in his eagerness to apply the moral to humanity, allow a word of pity for the victim to escape him.

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For humanity was Bernardino's charge, and, of all humanity, particularly Siena. Time and again he returns to the case of his own city to exhort her against her factions and the vices that were corroding her, and to threaten her with war and pestilence and every sort of retribution if she tarried from repentance longer. The passages of exhortation to Siena are, from a literary point of view, the finest in the sermons. There is an earnestness and a passion in them that is in itself a lyric quality. For the rest the best reading falls under two heads—the first, moral examples, little character sketches and passages of description, and the second pure anecdotes, invented, borrowed from Aesop, or culled at first hand from contemporary sources and burbished up to suit the needs of the occasion. A certain delightful literary flavour pervades all alike,

and all have that especial Bernardinian excellence that blends the virtues of the raconteur, the Franciscan monk, and the acute and meticulous observer of human kind. As far as poetry is concerned Bernardino does not so much as touch the hem of Francis's garment; there is no echo in all his writings of the beauty of the Canticle of the Sun; but why, after all, need one seek it in him? The Canticle of the Sun is the creed and testament of Francis, whereas the creed and testament of Bernardino is some lively and humorous precept for domestic life. From Francis one might discover a glimpse of the mystical poetry of earth and the transcendent glory of heaven, but Bernardino's revelation is neither more nor less than the way to be a good husband or a decent neighbour or an honest tradesman. Fortunately, however, there is no one scale in which to weigh the respective benefits conferred upon the world by the mystic and the practical man. For the purposes of comparison and contrast they are imponderable. Only the appreciation of posterity attests to benefits received, and the appreciation of posterity, whether it be literary, historical, pious or merely dilettante, will be likely, for as many centuries as are rationally compatible with prophecy, to bear some testimony to Bernardino of Siena.

EXAMPLES OF SAN BERNARDINO OF SIENA

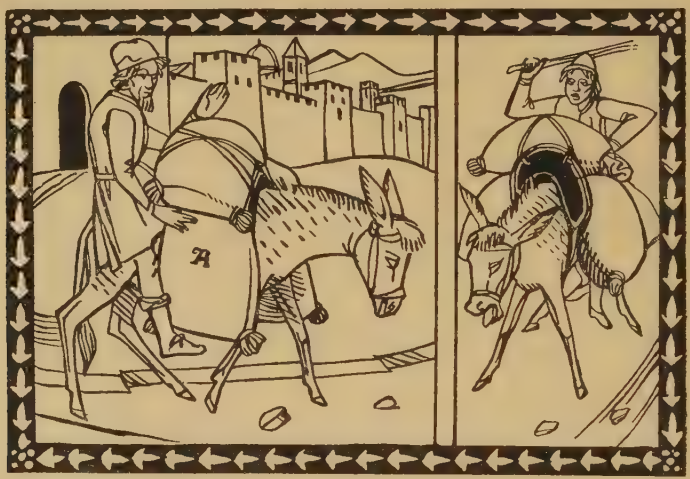
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE story of the donkey of the three villages? It was in Lombardy, and there was a certain road with a hut in it, about a mile distant from a mill. These three villages agreed to keep in the hut a donkey, which they could all use for carrying their grain to the mill. So it happened that a man from one of the villages went one day to fetch the ass, and loaded it well up with corn and led it to the mill. And while the grain was being ground he untied the ass and left it to graze; only as you know there is not much pasture round a mill, for the earth gets trampled with so much coming and going. When the grain was ground, the man took up his flour, loaded the donkey and led it home with its burden. And having unloaded it he put it back in its stable, but without giving it anything to eat, for he said to himself: The man who used it yesterday will have given it a good feed, so it can't be hungry to-day. And so he left it.

The Donkey of the Three Villages

The next morning another man from another village came for the ass. And he too, having led it home, and having put a bigger load than before on its back, without giving it anything to eat took it to the mill. When the grain was ground and the flour taken home, he led the donkey back to its hut, but still without feeding it, for he guessed that the man who had used it before would have looked after it. Besides,

said he, I have something else to think about just now. So he left it, and there you are with two days gone, and the donkey hasn't eaten a bite.

On the third day a third man came for the ass, and took it with him and loaded it worse than either of the other two, thinking to himself: Oh this is a public



donkey. It's sure to be a good worker. So he led it to the mill with its burden, nor did he feed it any more than the others had done. Then when his corn was ground he loaded the donkey up again and began driving it home. But it was weak with hunger, and did not go very fast. So next, upon my word, he began to use his stick, and showered the ass with blows, until at last, with great difficulty, he got the

burden home. Then, as soon as it could move, he took it back to its hut, still beating it all the time, and saying: So this is the donkey the Commune keeps for the use of three villages. It isn't worth a thing. And he beat it so that it could hardly get home. Nor of course, did he give it any food. Well, you can guess the rest. Namely that on the fourth day the donkey was dead.

On Charity, and how Man should do Charity

WHAT SHALL THE LORD SAY TO him who robs the charitable? Not only: You saw me hungry and you would not give me bread, but: You have robbed him who would have given, and now he can no more. You would rather see the grain rot in your storehouses than give it to the poor. You would rather give it to a dog than to the poor. And the same with your wine. You would let it turn sour and pour it out upon the ground, sooner than give it to a beggar dying of thirst.

And what think you the Lord will say to those women who have seen a poor man half-naked in the cold, while they wear gowns so long that they cover the earth? And to those that have sleeves so wide that they could clothe a pair of beggars with them? Oh, what maledictions will these have from God! He will shrink back at the sight of them, and say: Away, away, accursed handmaids of the devil, who would

On Charity, and how man should do Charity

rather sweep the roads with your gowns than give a covering to a beggar.

Yes, you there! Don't grin, for that makes the devil grin too. God's seraphim have two wings, and the devil's seraphim have also two, and you, with those great wings of yours belong to the devil. O foolish creatures, you can expect nothing but God's vengeance for yourselves.

This word also concerns women. What you give, give, I say, and do not sell. For you pretend to give, and all the time sell your gift at more than its worth. Sometimes you would be charitable to a poor woman —yes, but first it is: Just help me with this bed; and so you make her sweep out the room, and fetch water and sometimes you even make her spin. Oh fine charity yours is! the charity of old Dame Distaff—and yet you say: *I give!* No, that is not the way. Charity must be a living thing, not dead, like that of her who sells.

. . . Think what a little it is that God commands us. A very little is all he asks. He does not enjoin you to give more than you can. He does not want you to skin yourself. He says, You wish to give charity. Give it then. You cannot give a loaf? No? Then give a slice of bread. You cannot give wine? Then give water. You cannot clothe the naked? No? Then perhaps at least you can give him a shirt or a pair of drawers. You cannot cure the sick? Then at least be kind to

him, have pity on him and comfort him with words. You cannot get a prisoner released? No? Then visit him, and send him every now and then a little soup. *Ecce, Behold!*

WHEN YOU GIVE YOU SHOULD give willingly and cheerfully. Do you understand the word, Ecce, Behold! A quickness, a readiness is betokened by those four short letters. So every time you give, be willing, for the poor man is better pleased with a glass of water given cheerfully than with a measure of wine given grudgingly and with black looks. Do you know the way of many givers? The poor man or the priest comes to ask alms, and they say: Oh, wait you there; and he waits, sometimes half an hour, and when the giver has made him suffer enough, he throws a piece of bread out of the window, that often hits the poor man on the head. This I can say from experience, because when I went asking alms, a piece of bread thrown at me like that hit me on the finger, and gave me a lot of pain. Therefore I say to you, Give willingly, and when you are asked for the love of God, get up and go about it quickly. Ecce, Behold, and gladly.

O old miser, O old miser, I will provide you with an Ecce, Behold. Behold Death on top of you, and yet you provide nothing for your soul's health. Do you not see that you have already one foot in the grave?

Ecce, Behold!

What do you hope for, except death? O wretched fellow, make a light before you on the way. Do not wait for one to be made behind you, after you are gone. Do you know when it is that many people give alms? When Death stands at their pillow, and they can neither hope to rise again nor take their goods with them. Then they are like a money-box which has to be broken before the money can come out. Or like a child, that has an apple and bites at it and then offers it to his mother though he refused it her before. Ah, foolish man, wait no longer, wait no longer. When you see a poor man, help him; succour him yourself, do not wait for somebody else to do it so that you need do nothing.

I want to give you an example of a woman who had the habit of giving alms, and made use of this Ecce! of ours. She was once in church, and a poor man, half-naked, came up to beg from her, and while he asked the priest said *Sequentia Sancti Evangeli* (the remaining reading from the Gospel). The woman thought to herself: What shall I do? Shall I make this poor man wait, or shall I forsake the Gospel? If I make him wait, he may die of cold. So she went quietly into the corner of the church, and took her cloak off her back and gave it to the beggar. Listen now to the miracle. She returned to the altar and the priest was still at the same word!

Therefore go readily when you are asked, and be ready at once with your Ecce, Behold! And so, enough of that.

The Vanity of Woman

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE taverner who sells two kinds of wine at a time, one finer than the other, and gives the good one to his friends and those that drink often in his house and the other to the country louts? Just so does the vain woman do. She sells her best wine out of doors and in church, to those that stare at her, and the other she sells to her poor lout of a husband. When she goes to church she is dressed up, tricked out and garlanded like my Lady Esmeralda, and at home she is like a slut. What shame should you feel for your conduct in the privacy of your house, let alone among all the crowd. For it is your duty to be neater and better dressed when you are alone with your husband than among the greatest throng in church. And often you like to show yourself like a lion abroad, when at home you are nothing better than a silly sheep.

I HAVE TOLD YOU SOME stories many times, but I want to tell you one to-day that is all fresh, only a few years old. I had it from him who was the guardian of Mount Sion in Jerusalem.

A Hard Heart

In the year 1419 there went a galley to Jerusalem, to the Holy Sepulchre of Chriſt, and in it there went, among the reſt, an old woman, one of the accursedly proud sort; and she went inside the ship, as anybody who has made that journey knows you can do, to sit

down. So there she sat, with her legs ſtretched out, and a youth, a pilgrim also, in passing along the galley, trod on the old woman with his foot, and did her some hurt, for which nothing he could say or do could get him pardon. Finally, when they were come to Jaffa, where the pilgrims were unloaded, the youth begged her pardon again, many and many times, but she would not grant it. And so, ſtill unforgiven, he

went as the custom is, to the house of the priests, where all must confess themselves before going to the holy places, and when they are confessed they at once make communion. *A Hard Heart*

The youth, having confessed all his sins, and having told also how unfortunately, by an accident, he had hurt the old woman, and how although he had asked pardon again and again she would not give it, was told that he must go to her and ask once more, before he communicated. So he did, and having reached her said: Mother mine, I beg you for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord who was crucified for the salvation of all sinners who did him hurt, Oh I pray you that you will pardon the harm I did you. It was misfortune. I did not do it on purpose. For the love of God I ask you pardon. So he prayed her; but she would not hear him, and chased him away saying: I will not pardon you. In the end, not being able to get a single good word out of her, he returned to his confessor, and told him that not one good word could he get. Then the priest bade him go a second time, which he did, and begged her again pardon, for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord, which she again refused, saying that he would never have it from her. So again the boy returned, and yet again the priest bade him go. And as the woman had done before, so she did the third time also, saying that she would

A Hard Heart

not hear of pardon. Then having returned for the last time to his confessor, the priest said: Go then. Take the most holy Body of Christ, for you have done all that you could on your side. Go and communicate and make your devotions.

But oh, oh, oh, what horrible thing was this? O judgment of mighty God, what was it happened next? For when the youth was at the altar and had taken the body of Christ, in that moment the devil laid hold of the woman. There was a well in the midst of the church, and into this she was cast alive by devils, though it was so narrow that a person could hardly pass through it. She was not seen being thrown, but as there was the sound of a great splash and she could not be found, it was at once clear that the splash had been made by her. When they saw that she had disappeared, they at once fetched hooks to see if they could reach her. And having hooks suitable to fish up the body, they found it and drew it out. Then all understood that it was really the devil that had thrown her in, considering how small an offence had been done to her, and done by accident, and seeing with what great humility the youth had asked her pardon, and seeing where she was going, that is to the sacred and holy places where the Lord of Heaven and Earth had suffered for the salvation of sinners.

THERE WAS A PRIEST IN A CERtain village, a wise and understanding person, who had in his flock a money-lender, a rich man who could not read or write and never went to confession. And the priest took pity on this man, and so struck up a friendship with him and

enquired if he confessed at least once a year. At this the usurer mocked him, saying: Of what use is confession? But the priest talked with him so long that at last he was disposed to confess himself. So he came to the church and knelt at the priest's feet; and beginning the confession the priest asked him if he knew the Lord's prayer. No, Sir, I never could learn it, replied the money-lender. What! said the priest. You,

A New Method of Teaching

sixty years old and you can't say Our Father? Said the usurer: I have wanted to learn it many times, but I never could. I would gladly pay you a good sum if you would teach it me. The priest answered: Good. Then I will teach it to you gladly.

Some few days after, the priest ordered twenty poor men from the principal city to be ready at his command, and went to the money-lender and said to him: You have a good store of grain. I want you to lend twenty sacks of it for the love of God to twenty poor men, and you shall have it back again at harvest time. Certainly, said the usurer; not because he pitied the poor, but because he could lend weevilly grain and have fresh and sound back in return. Very well, said the priest, I will send them for it. Take good note of their names, so that you will be able to ask for it back again. Whereupon he went home and told the poor men what they were to do. Then he sent off the first man to fetch his grain, and the usurer asked him: What is your name? My name, said he, is Ourfather. God be with you, Ourfather, said the usurer, and gave him his sack. And the name of the second one was Whichartinheaven, and of the third Hallowedbe and of the fourth Thyname and so on, word by word to the end of the Lord's Prayer. So they took the grain away and used it for their needs.

The usurer, who could not write, set down their names in his mind, orderly, one by one, from begin-

ning to end. Then he waited until harveſt-time, and went round to the twenty men (all of whom he remembered) and asked them to give back the grain that he had lent them. But they said that they could not do it, and finally that the prieſt had given it to them and they had acted at his orders. Said the usurer: To you I lent it, and from you I require it back. Then a great discussion arose, and the usurer carried it to the Juſtice, and had his debtors called before him. Said the Juſtice to them: How can you be so ungrateful as not to give the good man back the grain he lent you for your needs? They answered that truly they had had the grain, but that they had had it through the prieſt, and that he had sent for them. Then came the prieſt before the Juſtice, and said: It is true as you say that the grain was lent, but this money-lender did not know the Lord's Prayer and this was the way I taught it to him. But, said the usurer, you haven't taught it me, and I would ſtill give something worth having if you could. Said the prieſt: Tell us now the names of those who owe you the grain. The firſt, replied the money-lender, is Ourfather; next, Whichartinheaven; next Hallowedbe; and so on right through the Lord's Prayer. Stupid clown, said the Juſtice, You have said the Lord's Prayer through from end to end. And he gave the prieſt and the twenty poor men leave to go freely from his court.

A New Method of Teaching

A Canine Saint

A GENTLEMAN HAD A FINE DOG called Bonino. Once it happened that he being away and his wife left at home with a baby of a few months old in the cradle, a great serpent came to devour the child. The dog went bravely out to meet it, and joined with it in a fierce battle, and in the struggle the cradle was knocked upside down. But he did so valiantly that he defended the child and killed the serpent.

When the master came back the dog went to meet him on the threshold with his mouth all bloody; and he, seeing the cradle on the ground, guessed that the dog had killed the baby, and picked up a dart and ran him through outright. Then he went farther into the room, and saw the serpent dead and, under the cradle, the child alive. Whereupon he knew that the dog had killed the serpent and saved the child; and great sorrow came upon him that he had slain him. So to give him due reward he had a sepulchre made in the public square and had the dog buried there, and set upon the tomb the name Bonino the Brave.

Long years after, women, believing that it was a human body, and hearing that the name written on the stone was Bonino the Brave, used to make offerings there; and soon he came into such repute that he was called Saint Bonino, and miracles were done at his tomb. And all the time it was only a dog.

Party Divisions

Oh Oh DO YOU KNOW THAT party divisions obtain now even to the way a man eats a peach? From the way he peels it, either down or across, another says: Oh, he's a Guelf, or: Oh, he's a Ghibelline, as the case may be. All this is mortal sin. And this *Guelf* and *Ghibelline* is one of the devil's devices for getting hold of your souls. Do you realise that now, every man, every woman, every child, down to the seed of the babe unborn, you have made either Guelf or Ghibelline? Two things alone remain that stand outside the parties, which perhaps you would do well to include in them. Do you know what they are? Bread and wine; and when you have assigned these to a faction, you would have to give up eating or drinking in order not to have to do with your enemies. And I tell you that who dies in this state will go to the devil's house. For if you offend against God to please the devil you choose your own sentence, and you go to a hot place.

THERE WAS ONCE A PARTY MAN who, when he died, had cut or written on his marble tombstone: Here lies the body of So-and-So, *cuius anima requiescat in pace*. And an enemy, seeing the inscription, struck out the A and put an E in its place, so that it said, *Requiescat in pece*— in a hot place, that is, which he most certainly did.

On Keeping One's Own Nose Tidy

THIS IS THE STORY OF A THING that happened at Siena. Once upon a time they used to sell flour from cellars, and there was a man decided to steal some of it at night from the market-place. This is how he went about it.

He tied a pouch on behind him, and also a little bell and went on all fours, so that everybody when they heard the bell, thought it was one of St Anthony's pigs. Then he opened the bins and took out some flour and carried it home, and this he did three or four times each night.

It happened that about this time a robber was captured and brought to justice, upon which the thief

of the flour said: He deserves a thousand tortures. He should have to work the way I do. And he showed the calluses on his hands that he got from going on all fours.

That's the kind of man to whom, when he speaks ill of others, one should say: Keep your own nose tidy. Yes, and it's the same with your old scandal-monger, who, when she hears them speaking of some other gossip who has been shown up, puts on her bravest airs to hide her own ungodly habits, and says: Yes, they say so-and-so, and such-and-such, and so-and-so. Ah, so they say, do they? Well, do you know what I say? Keep your own nose tidy.

HERE YOU HAVE ANOTHER EXample, this time of a wise and good Roman matron who had been left a widow. She was both rich and young, and although she was so sober in her mind that she had no wish to dishonour her body, yet because she was young and handsome she thought to herself: I do not know if I can manage to remain a widow.

So she talked it over with herself saying: Come now, if I take a husband, what will they say of me? They will say that I could not live without one. Yet she wished in her heart to marry, so she thought she would try the temper of the people on the subject, and

determined on this manner. She had a horse half-skinned, and said to one of her servants: Mount this horse and ride round all Rome, and observe what the people do and say about it. The servant therefore mounted, and began to ride round Rome. Lucky the man who could manage to get a glimpse of that skinned horse! So it was the whole day long until the servant returned home. Then his mistress asked him: What did Rome say about the horse? And he answered: Oh, oh, the whole city ran to see it, and everybody said: What marvel is this? So that he was a lucky man that managed to get a sight of it—there were such crowds.

The next day the lady had another horse skinned, and gave it to the servant with the same orders as before. So, just as before, he went riding round Rome, but not so many people came to marvel this time as they had at the first horse. Returning in the evening he was asked the same questions by his mistress, and replied: My lady, few people came to gaze to-day compared with those of yesterday. And again on the third day she had another horse skinned and sent the servant round the town in the usual way. When he came back she asked again: What did they say in Rome about the horse? And he answered: My mistress, hardly anybody came to look at it, and hardly anybody talked about it. Then said she to herself: Oh, I

can take a husband, and if the people want to talk about it, they'll talk for a little while and then be tired of it. After two or three days nobody will be interested in my affairs. And as she thought, so she did. She took another husband, and everybody said: That young woman has taken another husband. She couldn't do without one. This occupied them for two or three days, and after that she was talked of hardly at all. And I say she did very well.

The Fox and the Wolf

AVE YOU EVER HEARD THE story of the fox and the wolf? Even if you have I want to remind you of it. And lay it well to heart. There was once a fox in a country where she did much harm; so they laid a trap for her, a noose with a hen in it, by the side of a well. When the fox passed, she saw the hen, and jumped on to the kerb of the well. Now it was so arranged that as soon as the hen was moved everything fell to the bottom. And so it happened, for as soon as the fox touched the hen she fell directly into the well; and so, in order not to be drowned, she jumped into one of the buckets, and there she stayed.

It happened soon that the wolf passed by, and seeing the fox fallen down, said: Oh what means this, my sister? You so wise and knowing, how have you come to this pass? Said the fox: Oh indeed I am not,

A Lesson for the Pulpit

am not. But you know that you and I are of one kidney, that is we both live by stealing, so let us help each other as we should. Come, I look to you to help me all you can. Said the wolf: What do you want me to do? Said the fox: Get into that bucket and come down here and get me out. Said the wolf: Have you got anything to eat? Said the fox: Yes, there is a hen here. On hearing this the wolf got into the bucket, and at once by reason of his weight he began to go down and the fox in the other bucket came up. Said the wolf to the fox: Oh, oh, oh, oh, what's this? Are you going up? What kind of manners are yours? Said the fox:

The world is made like a stair, you know.
Some up, and others down must go.

THERE WAS ONCE A FRIAR OF our order who was a very rare preacher, and talked with such fine, fine reasoning it was a marvel—finer even than the thread that your daughters spin. And this friar had a brother just the opposite of himself—a coarse man, a great clown of a fellow, the most boorish of boors, whose habit was to go and listen to his brother's sermons. It happened, one time or another, having been to hear his brother preach, he came into a company of friars and said: Oh, were you at my brother's sermon this morning,

when he spoke so nobly? Said they: What did he say? Oh, said the brother, the noblest things you ever heard. But tell us, said they, what it was he said. Oh, the very noblest things in Heaven, finer than you've ever heard. He said—oh but why did you not come? I would never have believed he could have spoken such noble things. The others cried again: Come, tell us what these noble things were. But he could only answer: Oh you have missed the very finest sermon you could ever have heard preached. At length, having repeated this many times, over and over again, he said: He spoke of the highest and most noble things I have ever heard. He spoke so loftily that I could not understand a word he said.

Mistress Saragia

Now I tell you that it is right to preach the doctrine of Christ so that it is plain to all men. Therefore I say to you: *Declaratio sermonum tuorum.* Your word must be understood. How shall you make it so? Speak it clearly, clearly, so that whoever hears it goes away content and enlightened, and not dazzled and befogged.

NOW I WANT TO TELL YOU OF something that happened at Siena. There was once a certain Mistress Saragia, who was very greedy about black-heart cherries, and who had a vineyard out towards the Minster. When her husbandman came to Siena in May, said Mistress

Mistress Saragia

Saragia to him: Are there no cherries in the orchard? He answered: I was waiting until they were a little riper. Said she: Bring me some on Saturday. Other-

wise do not come to town. So he promised them, and on Saturday he took a basket and filled it with cherries and came to Siena, and brought it to Madame Saragia. When she saw him, she rejoiced, and took

the basket, saying: You are welcome, welcome. You have indeed done well. Then she took the basket into her room and began to eat the fruit in handfuls. They were sweet and big, great black-heart cherries, and soon she had a fine bellyful. When her husband came home to dine, the woman took a dainty little platter of the fruit and put it on the table, and said: The gardener came this morning, and brought us a few cherries. Then when they had dined, she took the cherries and began to eat them, in front of the husbandman, but this time she took them up delicately, and made seven bites of each one. While eating them, she asked the countryman: How do you eat cherries in the country? Miſtress, we eat them as you ate them in your room, in handfuls, he replied. Fool! said she, What are you saying, clown that you are! No, miſtress, he said, they do eat them juſt as I said.

Miſtress Saragia

So there is Madame Saragia, who pretends to be as dainty and as delicate as a rabbit, and all the time is nothing but a pig. And if you are like her, liſten and learn and become wise.

The Medicine of Ghinasso

O YOUNG WOMAN, YOUR BLOOD is hot—you are accustomed to be with your husband, to eat well, to sleep well. O wizard, read me the riddle, fine eating, fine drinking, soft sleeping, what good does it do? How does it help a woman? Oh you will come to a bad end,

and I want to show you how to escape it, and to remove from yourself the causes of sin.

You want to sleep? Yes. Then sleep in your clothes. Oh, you say, but I could never sleep that way! Then I will teach you. Sit up and watch, and I tell you that if you watch and wait until sleep comes you will soon be able to sleep on the bare and stony earth. And I tell you who use delicate foods and heat them up before

eating, that if you could teach yourself to sleep in your clothes that would be the loveliest tit-bit you could ever taste. What do you look for in sleeping? Heat in winter and cool in summer. Then I tell you that if you slept in straw you would find it most warm in winter and in summer most cool. Says she who is used to a life of luxury: I cannot live like this. I have lost my appetite. This does not please me, nor this, nor this. I cannot enjoy anything I eat. Do you know what you need? You need the medicine of Ghinasso; and I want you to listen to this, young widow, for this is a good story for widows.

Ghinasso was a wise man. He had made as much use of the good that was in him as others do of the bad. Once there came into his hands an abbot, fat, ever so fat, who was going to the baths of Petruolo to get thin. Said Ghinasso to him: Where are you bound for? Said he: I am going to take the baths at Petruolo. Oh, said Ghinasso, what is your complaint? I am trying these baths, said the abbot, because they tell me that they will be helpful to me. At present I can't enjoy anything I eat and I can digest nothing. Oh I will cure you, said Ghinasso, the best way in the world.

So he put him into a locked room, and every day gave him a handful of beans and a little cold water. And the abbot ate the beans and drank the water in

The Medicine of Ghinasso

order not to die of hunger. After four days Ghinasso gave him a little piece of bread and a little water, and he ate the bread as if it had been a delicate comfit.

The next day he gave him a piece of dry and mouldy bread with his water, and he kept him in this way for several days, until in the end he unlocked the door and led him out. Then said he: How does your stomach

feel? Oh, oh, oh, oh, said the abbot, it feels as though it could eat ſtones. Said Ghinasso: Do you think the baths could have cured you so quickly? The abbot said No. Said Ghinasso: How much would you have spent at the baths? Said the abbot: I would have spent perhaps sixty florins. Then give that money to me, and that will do, said Ghinasso. I am glad that you are cured. So in the end the abbot gave him the money he would have spent at the baths, and perhaps something over, and when he went to Rome and was asked how he had loſt his complaint he told everyone how Ghinasso had cured him.

The Disobedient Chemiſt

So I say to you, O widow, that cannot ſtomach this or that. Give Ghinasso's medicine a trial.

A CERTAIN MAN, HAVING fallen sick, sent at once for the doctor, who when he arrived said the patient muſt have some medicine, which the sick man asked him to prescribe. The doctor therefore went to the chemiſt and said: Take your book and write in it, For So-and-So, Receipt. A dram and a half of this, two drams of that, and so on, to be taken in so much water. And having thus ordered it, he left the chemiſt to make it up for the sick man. In the evening the brother of the patient came for the draught, but the chemiſt gave him inſtead a medicine that he had

The Disobedient Chemist

mixed according to his own idea, and not that of the doctor. This the brother carried home, and at night, when the right time came, he gave it to the sick man. But when the medicine was swallowed, it acted on him in such a way that he died. The brother went at once to the doctor, and told him what had happened. The doctor said that it could not be, if the chemist had done according to his order. The brother therefore went next to the chemist, taking with him two witnesses for safety's sake. As soon as the chemist saw him, he asked: How is your brother? Very well, replied the man. And how did the medicine act? asked the chemist. It acted very well. I think it is that which has cured him. Then, said the chemist, you have me to thank for it, since I made it up differently from what the doctor ordered. On this the brother said to his two companions: You are my witnesses as to what he has said. And he at once went to the Court of Justice to declare what had happened and how his brother had died. Whereupon the chemist was taken and condemned and lost his head. And this was because he falsified his wares in order to profit at somebody else's expense. Do you understand? Yes? Then be on your guard against doing the same.

THERE ARE LABOURERS WHO say: It is we who suffer all the hardships in the world, we who endure so much that we are martyrs the whole year long. At it, at it, at it, and never a reſt. If the sun is hot, it scorches us, and whether we want to or no we muſt go out to cut grass, split wood and gather in the harveſt. The same in the winter, in the snow and the cold and the wind, and if we were not to work so, there would be no harveſt to get in.

The Friars' Ease

Wait a moment, wait a moment, I want to answer you. And I think perhaps it is not only to a few that I speak, but that what I say will answer many. If ours is such a pleasant life as you say, and we enjoy it so much, one thing that I greatly marvel at is that more people do not come to share our ease. I do not see too many ſtruggling for this splendid tit-bit. You say perhaps that we have grain in our ſtorehouses and wine in our casks? True, but be patient a moment and hear my example, and then you can judge as you please. And I will tell you a ſtory to carry away with you and not forget. This happened in one of our houses.

There lived once near the convent a man who came often and often to speak with the friars, and among other things he said to them once: I do not know anyone who has a better time than you. And he gave

his reasons, saying: We go out to work, sometimes with the spade and sometimes with the plough, in the heat, in the cold, in the snow, in the hail and the ſtorm. And all the year we toil and can never put anything by. By the sweat of our brows we pay a thousandfold for our wine and the bread we eat. You ſtay here at your ease. Now you read, and now you write. When it is hot you keep cool, and when it is cold you sit round the fire. You have the pleaſanteſt life in the world. If you want bread you have it fresh every day, and it is the same with wine and everything you need. Said the doorkeeper, to whom he had spoken his heart: Would you like to try our life, and for us to try yours, and to choose which is the pleaſanter? Said the husbandman: I would greatly like it. Good! said the doorkeeper, to it. Which shall we try firſt—you ours, or we yours? Let us try yours firſt, said he. Then, said the doorkeeper, we will begin. Come to-night, and make a trial for eight days. With this the peasant was pleased, and came to the convent in the evening and was given his supper. He ate of what they gave him, and then was led to sleep on a sack of ſtraw, with perhaps one coverlet, and that likely to be full of fleas. In the night, at midnight, they came knocking at his door, as they did at the doors of the reſt: Up, up, brother! To Matins. Up! So he rose up and went into church with the reſt. There the

doorkeeper gave him a Rosary, saying: You do not know the office, so ſtand here, and say as many Paternoſters as will fill in the time while we are saying Matins. And when we sit, you sit, and when we ſtand on our feet, you ſtand. And so he enjoined him, and

they began to say Matins, *Domine labia mea aperies*, O Lord, open thou my lips. But the husbandman was not used to keeping awake, and soon he began to nod and droop forwards. Said the friar: Up, up, brother. Stand up. You muſt not sleep. He woke up with a great ſtart, and returned to his beads. So he ſtood for a little while, and then he began to droop backwards. Said the friar: Come, come, ſtand up. Say your beads.

The Importunates

Look, they have fallen on the floor. Pick them up. In fact he could not get through Matins at all, having to be wakened again and again. At last he said: Do you do this every night? The friar answered: This we do, without failure, every night of the year. Then, said the countryman, By our Lady, I have had enough of it. And satisfied with one night of this easy idle life of ours, he stood up and said: Unbar the door for me. I am ready to go.

OMETIMES WHEN I FIND MYself alone, there comes to me such a desire to laugh that if no one were by I would laugh so that it would be something to marvel at. For I find that no one has any kind of disagreement with anybody else but he appears at my elbow: Oh, Brother Bernardino, I pray you for the love of God do me a favour. There is a quarrel between So-and-So and Such-and-Such, and you could do great good by bringing them together again. Good! say I, what do you want me to do? I want you to send for So-and-So. But I have not servants and bravoes to make him come, and perhaps he does not want to be brought to me by force. This is not a thing for me.

Another comes who has had a quarrel with his wife, saying to me: For the love of God, arrange that it shall be settled between her and me. Another: So-

and-So owes me money, but he keeps me on the rack about it. He mocks me, and holds what is mine by force while I am in difficulties. Well, what do you want me to do? I am neither magiſtrate, nor ruler of the city, nor juſtice nor merchant, that I can make him give back what he owes you. In the same way if a son is driven out by a father he comes to me, or a father ill-treated by a son he comes to me; if a wife is turned out by her husband she comes, or if a man is sick he comes, or if another is in trouble he comes, and on my word I hear from you the ſtrangeſt rigmaroles that I ever heard anywhere. People come to me who want to tell me all their troubles in one breath, and they begin a thousand miles away from the ſtarting-point. And even a ſtranger came one of these days, and having reached me, he said: Sir, God give you good health. You are welcome, said I, what news? Said he: I want a piece of advice from you. What about? said I. So he began: The truth is that we had a prieſt in our church that we did not like, so we have turned him out and taken another, and now we underſtand that this one has been excommunicated. So I want you to send for him and admonish him and correct him of his fault. Oh, I answered, I am not a bishop to admonish or correct him. And he answered: To me you seem bishop and pope and emperor. And believe me, what he said he said in good faith.

The World's Justice

Now what you do to me here happens to me just the same wherever I go. You want me to be pope, bishop, judge and merchant, and to discharge every duty that belongs to them. Oh, I can't do everything, you know. Let everyone do his own business, and if somebody owes you money, go to the place you should do to get it back. If your wife has left you, or your husband, go and treat with your friends or your relations or your father-in-law—and so I say about all the strange things that you ask me to settle. Do you know the reason? It is because one man is fit for one thing, and another for another, and when you need the help of the bishop, don't come to me, because I can do nothing. When you need the advice of the judges, again don't come to me, because there again I can't help you. Go to them. This I tell you all, because your coming to me is simply a loss of time. I want to study and read and make a great long sermon to the honour and glory of God, and you come and take me away from my work, and make me stop and listen to your stories.

ONCE UPON A TIME THE LION heard that the friars were holding a chapter where wrong-doers accused themselves and confessed their sins. Said the lion: If the friars hold a chapter, and all their number go before the

chief, I am the chief of all the beaſts, so shall we be behind them in this? Therefore he called a chapter of the animals, who came before him. And when all were assembled, he sat down in a chair, and having settled himself in it, he bade all sit in a circle round him. When all were seated, the lion spoke: I do not wish us to be behindhand in this matter, therefore we shall hold a chapter as the friars do, where everyone shall confess his sins and the evil he has done. Therefore I, being the chief, will hear your confessions. I underſtand many wrong things are laid to your account. I speak to such as it concerns and I wish each of you to make his confession. Let the sinners come forward one by one and declare themselves guilty of what they have done.

The World's Juſtice

The ass was told to go firſt, so he came before the lion and fell on his knees, and said: O my Lord, mercy! Said the lion: What have you done? Speak. Said the ass: My Lord, I belong to a peasant, and sometimes he loads me up with a load of ſtraw, and leads me to the city to sell it. And it has happened, once in a while, that I have taken a mouthful as I went along, when my maſter was not looking. I have done it several times. What! said the lion. Thief, Robber, Traitor, Evildoer! Do you underſtand what you have done? When will you be able to reſtore the value of what you have ſtolen and eaten? And he at once

commanded that the ass should be taken out and given a great beating. And so it was done.

After him came the goat before the lion, and she too went down on her knees, asking mercy. Said the lion: What have you done? Speak out your sin. Said the goat: My Lord, I will tell my sin, which is that I have gone to the gardens of several women and done harm there, and especially to one widow's garden, who had her plot, where there were many sweet herbs, parsley, marjoram, thyme, and also basil; and often I did harm among certain cabbages and young shrubs, eating off the tips that were most green and tender. And as I did to her, so I did to many gardens, and sometimes I ate so much that there was not a single green thing left. Said the lion: Come, I meet at once with two consciences of a very different order—one so tender that it is almost too much, and the other so coarse like that of the ass there. And you disturb yourself because you have eaten a few herbs. No, no, go in good heart. Go and don't let it distress you. Go with a clear conscience, as I wish. There is no need to confess such a thing. It is the way of all goats. You have a good excuse, because you are inclined by nature to behave like this. Go, go, I absolve you freely, and don't think any more about it.

And as it was with the goat, so it was with the fox and the wolf, great thieves both. They were both absolved and freely pardoned.

The World's Justice

After the wolf came the turn of the sheep, and she came with bent head, meekly, saying: Ba, Ba. Said the lion: What have you done, Mistress Hypocrite? Said she: My Lord, sometimes passing by the way, on the side where the corn is sown, I have climbed up into the hedge, and seeing some shoots green and tender, I have taken a few mouthfuls—not torn them out by the roots, but just nipped off the tops where they were young and green. Then said the lion: O cursed robber, treacherous thief, what have you done? You go crying always Ba, Ba, and yet you rob in the highways. O evil thief, what a sin is yours. Take her off, load her with stripes; beat her till you break her in pieces, and keep her three days without food.

Oh, what salt there is in this story! Do you understand me? Crow never plucks out the eye of crow. When an evil fox or wolf does wrong, the rest hide, hide it, as a cat would. But when it is the sheep or the ass, that is the widow, or the poor, or the orphan that does some little thing, then it is, Kill, kill, kill—and so the world has it done. Wolf does not feed on wolf, but on the flesh of other beasts. And so I say to you: O you who rule, strike not the ass and the sheep for any little fault, nor praise the fox and the wolf when they are in great sin. What should you do? Temper the lute with judgment, discerning sin from sin.

THE SIN OF THE PARTY MAN is empty, vain and foolish, and yet it is the heavieſt sin there is. O you factious man, you are like him who has a frenzy, and when it is on him he has regard for none. He would slay his father and his brother and his mother as he would slay a sheep. This I know, and say it boldly and with truth. I have been in places where brothers ſtrove to be at each others' throats. You know it not, but you do worse than dogs or wolves. Do I speak the truth? You know from experience that I do. A dog does not eat his own flesh, nor a lion his, nor any beaſt his. To the party man his enemy is so hateful that were it his own father or his son againſt him, he would contrive to kill him. Come, hear an example, you of the factions, and perhaps you will profit by it.

The Folly of Faction

There was once a madman, travelling towards the weſt with a club in his hand, and the sun being at his back threw his shadow before him. When he saw the shadow, it seemed that there was another man like himself with a club in his hand, so he ran up to ſtrike him with his ſtick. But the shadow ran with him, and when he had gone some way and could not catch him up, he ſtopped for weariness. Then he rose up again, and again began to run to overtake the shadow. At laſt having gone some way, he came to a certain point of the road where he was obliged to turn, and then

his shadow went beside him. And so it went with him until it walked beside a little hill, when his shadow stood upright and tall at his side. Seeing it then on its feet with a stick in its hand, the madman flung himself upon it with his club, and so did he mix himself up with his own shadow that he broke his head.

So it is with the party man, the Guelf or the Ghibelline. Raving madman that he is, in his frenzy he breaks his own head and the heads of all his people. I know that if I were Emperor—I know well—but alas! the Emperor's rod is not in my hand—never mind, I would starve the party men, I would stamp out this sin, and if they were not sorry for it they would die abandoned. But come, I do not want to make you despair. Repent in time and do as I bid you.

HOW MANY OF YOU WOMEN are there who say: Oh, I had a wonderful vision last night. I saw such-and-such and it warned me that so-and-so is about to happen to me. And one says: The Virgin Mary appeared to me. And another: An angel appeared to me. And another: I saw the sun. And another saw the moon or a star that filled all her room with light. Do you know what I tell you? That it is a madness that has entered into you, and even if it seems to mean nothing, it will bring evil

upon you if you do not take care. Do you know why? Because I do not think you are any better than Brother Rufino, the companion of St Francis, to whom the devil appeared in the form of a crucifix, and said: This Francis of yours, you can be certain that he is nothing but a hypocrite. Frate Rufino was afterwards a saint, and he knew so well how to deal with the devil that he withdrew a little from his allegiance to St Francis. This happened several times, until Francis, seeing the new habit of Rufino, asked him his reasons, and finally said: Have you had any vision? At first Rufino did not want to tell him, but at last when Francis had asked many times, he confessed that he had had a very noble vision of a crucifix that spoke to him. Then Francis, who guessed what it was, said to him: Alas, believe it not. It will bring evil upon you, for it is the devil. So he advised him what to do, saying: Do you know what you must do the very next time he comes? You know he is a great enemy to humility. Therefore, as soon as he appears to you, spit in his face. If it is the devil, he will flee, but if it is God he will rejoice, knowing with what intention it was done. But the devil will flee at once, for he has not the humility to suffer a single injury. And so Rufino did. As soon as the vision came to him in the usual form, immediately he spat in his face. My faith, the moment he did so, it disappeared, leaving so great

Advice to Psychic Ladies

a ſtench behind that no one could remain in the place. All this he did to deceive the Friar. Therefore I say to you, watch what you do, and when there comes to you this vision or that, do not be too eager to believe what it tells you. Teſt it firſt, before you truſt it.

THERE LIVED AT ROME A CARdinal's servant, who went one night to Benevento, and there he saw a crowd of people dancing in a courtyard, women and children and youths. And watching them he was seized with great fear. When he had ſtayed some time in their neighbourhood he was somewhat reassured and went in to the place where they were dancing, ſtill a little afraid, and went near to them, and saw that they were all very young. Then, ſtanding by, he took more courage, and began to dance with them. And while all the company danced, morning ſtruck. At the firſt chime, they all at once fled away, save only one, whom the groom held by the hand, and when she would have fled with the others, held her faſt. So he pulled one way and she the other, and so they ſtruggled until daylight came. Then seeing how young she was, he led her home; and hear what happened. He kept her with him for three years, and she never spoke a word. It was discovered that she was of Slavonia. Think now if it had been well done, to take a child from her

parents and bewitch her in that way! Therefore I say to you, if ever you come upon one who is a maker of spells or potions, a witch or an enchantress, do your utmost to wipe her and her kind from the face of the earth, so that their seed perishes. For I tell you if you do not make this little sacrifice to God, you will see his great vengeance upon your city and upon your homes.

How to Use One's Own Judgment

IF A MAN WERE ILL AND HAD the fever, he would say to his serving-man or serving-maid if he had them: Give me a drop of water to drink. I am all on fire. The good servant or maid would say: No, I will not give it to you, because it would do you great harm. Then he would ask for it again, and the servants again refuse. Finally, he would say: One thing is certain—that if I ever get up again, I'll drive you out of the house. They would be patient with his harshness, even if he spoke with evil words and curses; and all the time they would be doing what was best for him. Next the sick man asks his wife. She is soft. She goes and gives him the water. And the water makes him worse. Now who has done better, the wife or the maid? The maid certainly, who would not give the water when asked, because the wife made him ill for six months longer than he need have been, whereas if it had been left to

the maid he might have been cured at once. So the mistress did ill, and the maid well. And do you know what happens? When the master is cured, he is better pleased with the maid that denied him than with the wife who gave him his way. To the maid he says: If you had given it me, I should now think ill of you; but I see you did what was best for me. And to his wife he says: You were the cause of my being ill longer than I had need to be. Oh, says she, but you asked me for it! But he might justly say: You know well that I asked for what was bad for me. You should have refused.

WANT TO GIVE YOU AN EXcellent example, and lay it well to heart.

A servant heard that a holy woman had fallen into a den of harlots and was in great sin. He therefore decided to go to her, and coming where she was, he preached to her so powerfully that he converted her and brought her out of the place. Afterwards he persuaded her to go with him to Rome, to the presence of the Pope, and do his penance, and be absolved by him. So they set off together, and the man looked always at his companion most holily, and never had any evil thought towards her. When they had been on the way some time, the woman said to the man: What shall we do? Surely it is better for us

to return home and build a hermitage where you can wall me in, so that I do not fall into evil ways again. But come every now and then to see me, and encourage me in good works. And this they did. They returned home, and the man built a hermitage and set the woman in it, and left just a little hole in the wall for him to speak with her through. And so they lived in holiness. And often he came to encourage her in the service of God.

It happened soon that the devil began to be on the itch for evil, and to rouse the appetites of these two, who used to speak to each other looking through a crack in the wall; and there came to them such thoughts as will come to a man and a woman. Look, look, look, the man began at last to say, people are talking about us. They are saying this and that. Then finally the woman took courage, and said: Come now, to prevent people talking, I think that when you come you had better come inside. Oh, oh, said he, what is the matter with you? Nothing at all, said she. Then what with gazing at each other, he decided to go in, and when he was inside they looked each other in the face and burst out laughing. Well, we need not tell the story at length. She was soon with child.

Tell me now, what was the cause of it? The cause of it was not being on your guard and taking care. And that is what I want to warn you of.

A Very Little Knowledge

TWO PRIESTS WERE ONCE TALKing together, and one of them said: How do you say the words for the consecration of the Body of Christ? The other answered: I say *Hoc eſt corpus meum.* Oh, said the firſt, you don't say it right. Neither do you say it right, said the other. And so they argued, yes and no, and while they were discussing it they were joined by another prieſt, to whom they put the queſtion. The answer was: Neither you nor you say it right. What you should say is, *Hoc eſt corpusso meusso*; and I will give you the reason. You see that the word is *corpusso*, therefore it muſt also be *meusso* to agree. So from now onwards, don't let me hear you saying anything but *Hoc eſt corpusso meusso.* The two prieſts, however, dissatisfied with the deciſion of the third, decided to go to the rector of the neighbourhood, and having made up their minds, they went and laid the case before him. And the rector's answer was: Oh, what need for all this argument, when I get along without any of it. I simply say *Ave Maria.*

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED when the farmers are sowing melons, or better ſtill corn, or even now, at the time of the ripening, that they plant scarecrows in the fields? You know how they do. They go into the

midſt of the fields, and take a sack, and fill it with ſtraw to keep the crows away. And on the sack they put a pumpkin, that looks like a man's head, then they make arms, and put a bow in his hand, ready ſtrung, as if he were going to shoot the crows. The crows are cunning.

The Scarecrow

They come flying round, and see the man, and are afraid of being killed, so they keep off all day and do not peck at the grain. Next day they come back and find him ſtill there, and they hover about till evening, ſtill without risking a peck. But they are hungry, so they are back again next morning, when they find things juſt the same as before. Then, seeing the scarecrow does not move at all, they begin to fly down on

to the ground, still at a distance from him, but bit by bit they approach the pumpkin, and in time they are right close up to it. Still very fearfully, however. Sometimes there comes a breath of wind—then they all fly away in a fright; but seeing that he does not move they come back again to eat, and this time draw even closer than they did before. Then it happens, one always venturing a little farther than the rest, that bit by bit they come right up to him, and seeing him quiet and motionless, one crow dares to fly up on to his bow. But still he does not move, nor draw his bow, so now there is nothing to fear. The crow is reassured, she flies up on his head, and defiles it.

Now nearer home. Do you know why I tell you this story? The scarecrow is the figure of the ruler of the people who goes to perform the office for which he has been elected, and he is not fit for it, useless, just a round O. He makes a proclamation—No one shall blaspheme, no one shall be abroad at night, nor gamble, nor carry arms nor libel his neighbours. And having published his proclamation, he goes on the track of wrong-doers with his bravoes, and here he finds somebody abroad at night, and others gambling, and others blaspheming God. So they are to be brought to court to pay the penalty. Now at once comes somebody into the magistrate's presence: O Sir, I beg and beseech you, a grace! You have in custody So-and-so,

who was found in the city after dark. I beg you for the love of me, pardon him. Oh, says the magistrate, the statutes say so-and-so. Did he not hear my proclamation? Does he not know the custom? Oh yes, says the friend, it is the custom to publish these proclamations, but it is also the custom to let off persons who are arrested. The ruler cannot refuse him and so the culprit is pardoned. And so with the blasphemer and also with him who does a crime. Little by little justice is made to depend on the prayers of those who come begging mercy for their friends.

Do you know what I say to such a ruler? I say: You are a miserable nought; you have forfeited your honour, for everybody sees what you are like and will come in time to treat you with the contempt that the crows do the scarecrow.

YOU WHO GO SELLING YOUR wares in the street, when a stranger comes and asks you: What do you want for this? you say: I want thirty soldi. But of a fellow-citizen you don't ask more than twenty. Nor do I accuse shopkeepers only. The countryman is just as bad when he gets the chance. Yes, they know how to skin people too. Sometimes, for instance, a peasant with a load of wood meets a stranger, and the stranger says to him: What do you want for that wood? He stands

Providence

ſtill in the road and says: Oh, you don't really want to buy it. Yes I do, if you'll sell it me, says the ſtranger. What's the price? Well, these are very fine logs, these are. What do you want for them? Eh, it's a good long way I've had to carry them. Yes but what is the price of them, tell me? You wouldn't see logs like this every day; these were cut in May; they're fine and dry now. (And ſtill he won't tell how much he asks.) Well, but how much do you ask for them? The peasant says: That load's worth seven soldi. But even when he does reply he doesn't ask an honeſt figure.

Ah me, as I go among you, looking at you one by one, I find you all on tip-toe to make more money than your rightful dues. But this I say to you. Under no circumſtances is it right to sell a thing for more to one and less to another. You should sell it for the same to him who knows its value and to him who does not.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT GOD does for the charitable man who prays for subſtance either to give away to the poor for the love of God or for some other need—either to marry his daughters, or whatever it may be? He always provides. And do you know what he does sometimes to a rich man? He does as a woman does to her child. When he wants a thing she gives it to him. When he cries she puts the fig into his hand,

though she knows that it would do him harm if he ate it. She does not give it him to eat, but just to soothe him, and when he is quiet she says: My son, give me that fig; give it me, my little pet, give it back. If you won't I won't be your mother any more. Give it me, my darling. And if the child gives it, she says: Oh, that's my good boy. Now you are my own little son. But if he will not give it, and begins to cry again, she says: No, go away. You are not my boy. Go right away.

So God does to the man who asks him for the things of this world to give to the poor for the love of God. God gives at once, and in abundance, and makes him rich. And when the beggar comes and asks for alms, then it is like the mother with the fig. If you give, God says to you: Oh, you are my own good son. I will be your father. But if you do not give, then he drives you out of his house, and says: Go, hence, you are my son no more; and so he drives you forth.

MY FRIENDS, TAKE THOUGHT for your souls' health while there is time. Listen to my sermon where I shall tell you where your souls' health is. I want to tell you that there is a certain place in Italy to which sometimes thirty or even forty thousand people come to

Brother Rod hear a sermon; and do you know who the preacher is? He is Brother Rod. Oh, he is a great preacher in those parts. Pray God they give an ear to his word, though I daresay they do not.

I have such fear for you, because of the things you do, that I tremble lest you come to a bad end. Do you know why? Because I see you in danger, and that you may take thought to help yourselves I want to show you to-morrow that you are in greater peril than men ever were in before. Yes, but if I do not make you see the truth, you will say that I am dreaming. Assuredly one of you will say to me: Brother Bernardino, you are asleep and dreaming. Yes, someone is sure to say that. But rather I should say to you that you are asleep.

Well, I cannot stay here. I must go away, and when I go, for the fear that I have for you and the love I bear you, I shall keep my ears always open, so that I shall hear news of Siena, for which I have such fears. Yes, when I go, it will be with a bosomful of grief and sighs lest evil befall you. Do you know why? It is because I am afraid another preacher is coming here in my place. Do you know his name? He is called Brother Rod, and he has a great hearing among people disposed to evil like yourselves. His sermons bear such fruit that here at Siena you would hardly credit it.

WHAT DOES THE MORNING signify in the life of a man? It signifies infancy, which is like a tender plant—the time when you are a child. O children, you have something that your elders will not have again. For this I tell you, both young and old, in life there is no turning back; if you are old, you will never grow young again. This I say to you, O woman. You will never be a girl again, lovely and gay and handsome as you once were. If you have lived a bad life, you can turn back and mend it and leave evil ways; but in years there is no turning back. And you, O man, when you are come to eighteen years you are gallant and fresh and lusty and merry, and that is called the flower of your youth, and lasts until you are thirty. All the time you live there is no happier, merrier time than this; therefore David called it the flower of life. When thirty years are passed, evening begins, and goes on until the age of forty. Then certain servitors begin to wait upon you—Sir Greybeard, and others with other messengers. *Induret et arescat.* You begin to grow stiff and the sap dries. Then from forty to sixty years a man begins to shrink and become bowed, his eyes grow red and rheumy. He goes with his head bent towards earth; he becomes deaf; he cannot plainly see the light; he loses his teeth. When he comes to seventy or eighty years, palsy begins to seize him and his head shakes. When his wine is

given him, he takes it and his hand trembles and half of it is spilt before he can put his hand to the cup; and when he has it at his lips and begins to drink, then spittle falls into the wine. So too when he takes his soup. He puts the bread to his lips, and the trembling of his hand makes him smear all his mouth and chin. When someone speaks to him, and he is deaf, he ſtares like a person amazed and thunderſtruck. You ask him one queſtion and he answers another.

And so he comes to his end. As he lived, so he dies. If he has lived well, it will be well for him, and if he has lived ill, it will be ill. If his life has been evil here, then it will be ſtill worse beyond. If he has been discontented, sinful, and has forgotten to fear God, nobody on earth will have made him welcome, neither his flesh and blood, nor his acquaintance. No one will have been glad to see him, but rather sorry. And the same when he passes from here. Neither God nor the saints will have pity on him, and thus he loses all the good that might have been his reward if he had been righteous, and his soul goes to an accursed home.

But if he has lived well, shown himself a man of upright ways, feared God, borne his troubles without complaint and not yielded to rebelliousness or impatience, when he dies every saint will pity him, and with jubilee and rejoicing he will be received into the house of God and heavenly glory.

I WANT TO TELL YOU THE story of a merchant who kept his wares in the damp so that they should weigh more. It is the ſtory of the devil and the deep sea. There was another merchant who wanted to buy saffron, so he came to the shop of the firſt man, who had it to sell, and said: I want all the saffron I can buy. Said the other: I will let you have mine; and he showed it to him. The buyer knew at once that it was damp, so he said: Have it taken to my house, and I will weigh it there and give you the money. The firſt man thereupon sent it off at once so that it should not have time to dry and went himself immediately after the carrier to see it weighed. When he arrived, the other merchant said: Do me a kindness. I cannot wait now to weigh it. Seal it up and let it ſtand a little, and I will soon be back. So the seller did, and went his way. But my word, as soon as he was out of the house, the saffron was taken and put into an oven near at hand, and when it was dry it was put back into the bins it had been taken from.

After a while the seller came back, and the saffron was weighed and he took his money and went about his business. So there you are—on one side the devil, and on the other the deep. One made it damp so that it should weigh more than it should, and the other dried it so that it should weigh less. And so he who digged the pit for another fell into it himself.

The Better the Day the Better the Deed

WANT TO TELL YOU SOMEthing that perhaps you'll think a lot of. I have heard that King Louis the Ninth of France was a very godly man, and very wise. Certain men once came to him to ask a boon. They wanted to ask pardon for one who was in prison, and they decided to go on Good Friday, and this they did. And having arrived, one ſtepped forward and spoke as had been arranged. Holy King, he said, we ask you a boon for the love of our Lord, whose will it was, on such a day as this, to die for the health of the human generation, to free it from the bonds in which it was bound by the hand of its enemies. And he made a long and excellent speech. Then when he was finished, he said: Give us this man whom you have in prison. The King answered them and said: You are very welcome. I will not answer you now, because I wish firſt to see how the matter should be settled. Then he had his breviary brought to him, and opened it haphazard, and began to read. And the firſt thing that ever came to his eyes was, *Beatus vir qui cuſtodit iudicium et facit juſtitiam in omni tempore.* Blessed is the man who keeps wise counsel, who does juſtice at all times. And when he had read this verse, he at once commanded that the man should be taken out of prison, and juſtice done. And so it was done at once, all on Good Friday.

Good, good. Blessed be Good Friday. For I tell you

that at all times it is good to preserve and do justice. And I say the King did well and mercifully to do the deed on that day, for he had thought for nothing but justice.

An Innkeeper Punished

THERE WAS A CERTAIN INNkeeper who sold wine, and when he served their measure to his customers, he would wait until it was just about to be drunk, and then go for the jug in which he decanted it, and if there was a dreg left he would pour it into the glasses, so that most often he made them spill over. And every time he poured this last drop in he would say: Full measure and overflowing! Full and overflowing! And if there was still a drop left in the jug he would pour that on to the ground, still crying: Full and overflowing! Sometimes when there was a cloth on the table, with full glasses upon it, he would shake it on purpose, and spill the wine over on the cloth, then go for his jug again, and there would be more, Full and overflowing. He said this so often that in the end he could never pour out a glass of wine without it.

It happened that a certain customer of his, having seen him do this so often, came to understand that it was done on purpose. He waited therefore until the innkeeper was out of the house on some affairs, and went down into the cellar where the wine was kept,

An Innkeeper Punished

and found a great cask, and pulled the bung out of it, and let the wine run, and then went outside and began shouting: Full and overflowing! Full and overflowing! The hoſt, being outside, suddenly saw a ſtream of wine coming towards him, and greatly amazed, ran to the cellar and saw it pouring out of the cask, while all the time it flowed the patron never ceased shouting: Full and overflowing! Full and overflowing! Then it occurred to him that the man who was calling out was the one who had pulled out the bung; and having decided that it was so he went to accuse him at court. So the culprit was taken into cuſtody, and when queſtioned as to whether he had pulled out the cork or not, and having confessed that he had done it, he declared his reason, saying that whenever the hoſt poured wine for anyone that came to drink in his tavern he never did it without crying: Full and overflowing! Full and overflowing! And he said: This he has done many times to me when I drank at his house, and when I complained at his spilling the good wine, he said: Oh, it's a good thing to spill a little, it makes for temperance. So because he said it made for temperance, I pulled the bung out of his cask, so that he too might have his *Full and overflowing*! I wanted this once to cry *Overflowing* at his expense, seeing he said it a thousand times at the expense of others.

To Every Ill its Proper Cure

IF YOU GO TO THE DOCTOR because you have a pain in your ſtomach, and he going by the written word lifts down his book and says: I will prescribe according to this author, but happens to open the book at a place where there are medicines and remedies for pains in the head and gives you one of those prescriptions, you'll never get any better with that medicine. And the same way with the chemiſt. You muſt underſtand that you muſt ask him for the remedy for your particular complaint. For if you go to him for the medicine that has been ordered, and say: Give me so-and-so, and he merely takes down his firſt bottle or casket and gives the patient something out of that, that will never make him any better. In the same way if a man needs medicine for his ſtomach and is given something for the head or arm, that won't do him the slighteſt good. And however long he goes on with that medicine, using it diligently, he ſtill won't improve. Therefore I say to you that in order to be cured of an illness, the sick man muſt get juſt the remedy required by his complaint.

And the same here. The preacher muſt preach juſt those things that are needed for the well-being of the people that come to hear him. Therefore I say that I muſt take thought to cure your special ill, as far as lies in my power.

A Parable of a Fig-tree

THERE WAS A MAN HAD A VINEyard, where he planted a fig-tree. After it had been growing for two years, he went there when the season came for fruit, but he did not take his basket. It was one of those great fine figtrees, you know, that come from Massa. He came to the foot of the tree, and looked at it, and he saw that there was no fruit upon it. The next year he came with his hook, thinking he would find a fig or two to pull down, but he found none. He thought: Oh it has used the time to grow well instead. The next year he came again, and this time he took both a hook and a basket, for he said to himself: It must be grown now, and there must be plenty of fruit on it. Yet when he came there he found none. So he called the husbandman and said: This fig-tree is good for nothing. Cut it down; it is taking up good ground. But the workman said: No, let us leave it this year and not cut it down. I will turn the earth a little at its roots, and break up the ground round about, and perhaps it will do better. But if it bears no fruit again next year, then I will cut it down.

We might say that the city of Siena was this fig-tree. The first year was when I came here, and with the word of God in my mouth besought you to give harvest to the Lord Almighty. The second year I went away thinking that you would do better than when

I was here. But you bore no fruit, and you did worse than before. The third year is this one, in which I find you more ill-disposed perhaps than you ever were to bear fruit. God has waited and waited, and yet you harveſt nothing for his glory, but do all things con-

A Parable of a Fig-tree

trary to his will. Wherefore he is angry againſt you, and believe me, he has it in his thoughts to cut down this tree, which is barren, since he has already waited so long. But if he has patience and waits this year as well, and ſtill you bear no harveſt, then Beware, Beware, Beware O Siena, Beware!

You can interpret in another way also these four years in which God has waited for your conversion

A Parable of a Fig-tree

and provided always for your needs, so that you might mend your ways. The first year he has given you corporal blessings, and has kept the deathly plague from you and other adversities. The second year he has given you many temporal goods, corn and wine and oil and cattle, and of all things great plenty. And he has given you these things that you should bear fruit for him, but you are more obdurate than ever before. The third year he has given you spiritual blessings. How many excellent preachers have you had, wise doctors, who for the sake of your souls' health alone have come to your city. Believe me, God has waited so long that he will wait no more. If you delay yet another year and bear him no fruit he will say: O people accursed, you have no excuse. The earth is turned. You have been shown and taught. You have been shown your folly and your sin.

Do you know what God will do when he will wait no longer? He will turn the earth and sow it with mortality. You will die of the pestilence like dogs, and so great will the plague be that the race of the city will perish, and there will be none to govern and none to obey. Nor will this suffice. He will send a mighty war upon you, so that you will not be able to plough the earth and gather in corn and wine, and so great a famine will follow that you will see your children around you dying of want.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU should do, you who have gone so long against the will of God? The first thing you should do is to put off doing evil—put it off, and turn to doing good. Take example by him that wants to make the journey to Rome, which lies just in the opposite direction to Camollia. Setting out for the capital, he puts himself in the right path, and passes out of the city by the New Gate, and so goes straight on the way for Rome. Do not do as they do who say: I want to go to Rome, but go to the Porta Camollia, and out by that way, which is exactly in the wrong direction. They meet somebody who says: Where are you bound for? I am bound for Rome. You are not going right. And yet he keeps on. He goes to Fontebecchi; he goes farther; he goes to Florence; he goes farther than that; and still when somebody asks him: Where are you going? he says: I am going to Rome. Where do you come from? I come from Siena. Oh, you have taken the wrong road. You are going in the wrong direction, all out of your way. You have come all these miles for nothing. Then he says: Which way should I have gone? And the answer is: Don't go this way any more. Stop, turn back, and take just the opposite way. So you see that you must stop, then turn back, and so proceed to Rome.

The Wrong Road

This is a story I would tell to him who says: I want

The Treacherous World

to go to the Kingdom of God; and yet goes by the way of sin, which is away from God. He does one wrong, then another, then another, and the more he does the farther he gets from God, and going on in this way he will never get to God at all. Yes. See that you stop in the way. Go no farther in this road; and when you have stopped, turn about, my son, and take the road that will lead you to life everlasting.

THINK HOW THE WORLD DE-ceives on every side. As you see it in great things, so it is in small. Take this example, O you woman who has a greedy husband. Sometimes your husband is greedy and anxious for fine tit-bits and likes a rich stew. So he will go to the butcher and choose a piece of fine fat veal and buy it. Then he takes it home and says to his wife: Make me a dish of good stew. When she has made it, she dishes it up, and brings it to table, and by misfortune, with the very first bits that the greedy husband puts in his mouth he swallows a fly that had fallen into the pot. Oh, oh, oh, oh, that is a moral for us. How many there are who have found themselves in great estate and then have come to nothing. How many have rich pleasures in their grasp, and then when they seem to have everything the fly falls. There is no tit-bit you can find in the world that is perfect. You see, and this

often and often, how the bride comes to her husband. She is dressed up, decked, adorned, combed and perfumed. Wait a minute! Ask her husband's mother what she thinks. Yes, she comes finely decked out; she has jewels, a wreath on her head and a golden ring.

So she comes to the house of her husband, and when she has been there a little, the old mother says to her son: Your wife says this and that. She tells me that she wants to be mistress of the house, and do everything her own way, and nothing mine at all. Oh, it's true what the proverb says: The ass comes from the mountain, and drives the horse from its stall. There

True Charity

where she hoped to be helped, respected and loved, she finds hatred beginning to grow. Oh, where is that happy time you had once? How long did it last? Not long. There was a fly in the ointment. I tell you there is nothing good in this world. Do you want to have it plainer still? Which one of you is contented, man or woman? Has anyone ever had his happiness, and there was no fly in it? Not one of you, not one of you there is that does not know the pricks of the world. Troubles are the pricks of the world; therefore do not trust to it. It is treacherous. If a man were wise he would pin his faith to God rather than to the world, saying, I know that the world is not to be trusted. It is full of falseness, fair of promise and evil in result.

HAVE A WORD TO SAY TO those that do their charity by making chapels or chalices or altar-cloths or church decorations, on which they put their arms. Why, think you, do they stamp their arms upon their gifts? For no reason except that it shall be known who gave them. What do you think these arms mean? They mean emptiness and smoke, for the wish of those who give such gifts is only that others shall know of their charity, and as the spirit of the gift is, so is its worth.

The fame of such givers is only among the people of the earth. Do you think the soul feels it? Little

enough, I think, for it is nothing but the smoke of earthly glory. So I say for the guidance of those who wish their alms to bear fruit: Give in secret, for such is the charity that pleads for you always before God.

Man's Charity to Man

YOU SHOULD TAKE EXAMPLE from the birds and the beasts if you cannot take it from your own kind. O boys, when you catch swallows, what do their consorts do? All the wives collect together, and try with all their might to help the husbands. Man does not so. He does not try to help his fellow-man. There is no pity in him. Man is worse than the birds. O butchers (are there any among you who hear?), have you never

thought of what I say? Have you never seen it, when you come to kill some big beaſt? When you slay a calf, and there is another looking on, or the cow, or the ox—surely you muſt have seen them weep with tears in their eyes for pity of the one that muſt be slain. Confusion upon man, who is so cruel that he has no pity for his fellow-man! The beaſts are more pitiful than you—the very pigs, that have such compassion for each other, that when one cries, the others run to help if help they can.

O YOU KNOW HOW TO BLOW up a bladder? You boys, you know. You take a ſtraw and blow down it, and so it fills and fills and fills with air. Then when it is blown up to its fulleſt you tie it with a thread, and it will never go down of its own accord. Then comes along someone who wants to burſt it, and you know how he does. He jumps on it, and it goes off with a great bang, juſt as if it were a cannon.

Sometimes this can happen in a city. The people are filled to the brim with excitement, and exalted and beyond themselves, and then comes the explosion, and somebody is killed and somebody else driven into exile, and everything goes ill. Far better it would be, when you were all blown up to make a little prick with a needle, and so go down little by little.

Choosing a Wife

DO YOU WISH YOUR WIFE TO BE faithful to you? Then you keep faith with her. There are many who want to take wives, and cannot find them. Do you know why? Because the man will say: I want a wise woman, while all the time he himself is a fool. That is not right. Fool must wed with fool. And you, what kind of a wife do you want? Oh, a tall one, you say. And you are a snippet. That's no good. There is a certain country where the women find husbands according to their height. And there was a man of this country who wished to take a wife, and wanted to see her first. So he was taken to her house by her brothers, and they showed her to him barefooted, without a hat, and when they measured her she was taller than any other girl in the place. Finally they asked him: Well, do you like her? And he answered: Yes, I like her very much. But the girl, seeing he was such a little nobody, said: Well, I don't like you. And that was a good one for him.

Well, to return to our subject. How do you want your wife to be? You want her honest. And you yourself are dishonest. Again, what kind of a wife do you want? A temperate one. And you yourself are never seen outside the tavern. You won't find one to your taste. And you, what wife do you want? An industrious one. And yet you waste the whole day. What do you want? A peaceable wife. And you are

A Bachelor Establishment

a man who would pick a quarrel with a straw if it pricked your foot in the road. And what wife do you want? An obedient one. And yet you have never obeyed your mother or your father or any other person. You don't deserve one. Finally, what wife do you want? Oh, one that is good and beautiful and wise, in fact one that has all the virtues. Well, I tell you that if you want such a one so you must be yourself, for if you expect her to be virtuous, good and beautiful, be sure she will expect the same of you.

O YOU KNOW HOW A MAN lives that has neither wife nor house-keeper to look after him? Oh, I will tell you, because I know. If he is rich, and has grain in his storehouse, the sparrows eat it and the rats. And the same with his wine and his oil. Do you know also how he sleeps in his bed? He sleeps in it as it were in a ditch, and once he has put on the sheet he doesn't move it off again until it rots. The same way in the room where he eats. There it's all melon-rind, bones, scrapings of salad, everything lying about the floor, from which nothing is ever swept. And what is the table like? Well, the cloth's laid on it, and doesn't come off it until it falls to pieces. He cleans the dishes up bit by bit. The dog licks them, and washes them that way. And the plates? All covered with grease. Do you

know how he lives? He lives like a beaſt. And I say that no man can live well alone like that. The woman is the one who knows the care of the house. That she does underſtand.

ST FRANCIS WAS BY NATURE moſt magnanimous. Do you know what that means? When a man is magnanimous he is of noble soul; he is something like God, and oh, he does marvellous things. When Francis was eighteen years old, it was his wish to go into Apulia to be a captain, and on his way one night he had a wonderful dream, in which he saw a palace full of crosses and banners and arms. After he had this dream, he fell grievously sick, and while he was lying sick, God sent him a holy vision, in which he spoke to him, and said: Francis, go and rebuild my house. But Francis said: I have no money to rebuild it. Firſt it seems I muſt become a thief and rob my father. So he ſtole a purseful of money from his father, and carried it to St Damian, but St Damian refused it, so Francis threw it out of the window. Then being doubtful about his father, he kept away from home for three days, because he was afraid, and neither ate nor drank, whence he became so thin, weak and lifeless that he could hardly ſtand upright. But he remembered the saying of Paul: *Cum infirmor, tunc fortior sum.*

St Francis of Assisi

When I am weak, then I am made ſtronger. And he was all disposed to humility, so that the people thought him mad, and one would give him a blow on the nose, and another throw ſtones about his feet, but he went always safe and whole, because of his love for God. Thus he came back to Assisi, and a school-boy, seeing him, cried out that he was crazy, and tormented him greatly, but ſtill he went safe and humble, and spoke no word to anyone. And this was the firſt sign that he gave of having in him the grace of God, namely that he saw how all things of this world were vanity. And the second sign was his deep humility, for when he came to his father's house, he diveſted himself of all his possessions, and wanted no earthly goods. But his father had him put in prison because of the theft; and later seeing that his son wanted none of the things of this world, but only to live in poverty, he said: I want you to refuse all inheritance of my possessions. Since you do not want them, renounce them. And Francis laughed and said: I renounce; and he diveſted himself ſtraightway of everything that was his father's and gave it back to him in the presence of the bishop. And since thus he was undressed, the bishop covered him with his cloak, whereupon Francis said: *Pater Noſter*—Our father, I have no other father on earth but you. Then the bishop gave him a frock, and he put it on, with the hood on his head, and he girt

himself with a cord, and went about doing penance. And Brother Bernard, a knight and learned man, went with him, for he was converted and given to humility like Francis. And from this he came to greater penance, making always a good example of himself, purifying his conscience with confession and communion, until he was in the end inspired of God and all things were forgiven him.

AVE YOU EVER HEARD WHAT St Peter Pettinaio saw? If you don't know, I will tell you, and you can think of it when you go down to see his tomb. He used at that time to go to Matins, and his cuſtom was to go to hear them at Siena. And in the church he saw two angels entering with branched candleſticks, and at the altar he saw none other than Chriſt himself, around whom, on the floor, it seemed to Peter there were ashes.

Standing there a little, he saw people come, barefooted, and they set their feet there where were the footprints of Chriſt. After them came old men, and they too tried to put their feet in those prints, but there were so many footmarks of those that had passed that they were hardly to be seen. The laſt of all he saw come in Francis, the little poor man, who set his feet ſtraight in the tracks where Chriſt had trod, though

the trace of them was hardly visible. And this was only because he had shown himself so close a follower of God, that no one could be found who had trod more nearly in Chriſt's footſteps.

TWELVE YEARS AGO THERE WAS a man at Fermo who came suddenly out of a wood, declaring all kinds of follies and wild ſtories, and drew the people after him

with a tale that one day they would go to the Holy Sepulchre on dry land. And he made them all ſtrip themselves naked, both men and women, and put them on the road towards Fermo. When the crowd saw these

people, they began to cry: Oh, what means this? What new idea is this? What do you all mean to do, going on in this way? And they answered: We are going to the sea; and when we have reached it the sea will open, and we will enter in and come to Jerusalem without once putting a foot in water. But when this came to the ears of St Louis, the Lord of Fermo, he at once put them all in prison, and rightly too, for these things displease God, being against all reason.

The Wedding Ring

Again, take the matter of miracles, especially that of the milk of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Women, where are you, and you too, my fine men, who have seen it? You know they show it to you for a relic. But don't you believe in it, because it isn't true. And they show it you in so many places. But take my word for it, it is only a deception. Was the Blessed Virgin perchance a cow, that she left her milk, as the beasts do, that let themselves be milked? No. And I tell you what my opinion is: I believe that she had just so much milk, neither more nor less, as sufficed to fill the little mouth of Christ Jesus the blest.

THE RING IS THE HEART, AND the finger is faith. The woman that wears a ring on her finger, that ring that she carries, what does it mean? It means that she should keep faith with her husband, with mouth, with heart

The Weakness of Women

and with deed; and every time she breaks faith she lies in her throat. Is there no one here that has fallen, no wife of ill repute? Oh, when you fall from the way, then the ring that you wear tells no truth, for you show that you have broken faith with your husband. Your heart is not faithful to him, and when you have dealings with a courtesan your mouth is not faithful to him, and when you fall into sin you are not faithful to him in deed. You see that, though you carry the ring, the sign of faith, you deny it. For neither in word, nor in deed, nor in thought do you keep faithful.

THERE ARE SOME WOMEN THAT, whenever they see a new fashion, or whenever they see a courtesan dressed up in the French style, they are at once struck by it. Is there a single girl or a single married woman in the city who is not dressed in the modern way? As soon as they see a new fashion they must pull their own gown to pieces, and have it re-made in the new style. Do you know what ought to be done with them? First you ought to take and burn the woman who wears such clothes, then the mother that allows it, and after that the tailor that makes them up. Certainly if I had my way there would be no such things as fashions. Can you not understand that they are ruining your city? And this I would say as well. That whoever makes the

gowns, or wears them, or allows them to be worn is guilty of mortal sin. But most of all the tailor, who with his clever scheming is the occasion of so much evil.

Fine Feathers

YOU GIVE YOUR DAUGHTER TO a man for his wife, and neither he who takes her, nor his father nor his mother thinks whence come the fine things she brings with her. If they were wise, that would be their first thought: Whence come these fine things, these gowns and these garments, that are her dowry? For many times, aye! and most times, they come from thieving and usury, and the sweat of peasants, and the blood of widows,

The Peril of Faction

and the marrow of babes and orphans. If you were to take one of these fine gowns and crush it and twist it, you would see drip from it the blood of living creatures. Alas! you do not think what cruelty you do, to dress in the clothes another man has earned for you while he is dying of cold.

THERE WAS A CITIZEN IN A CITY where there were many factions. And he fell ill, whereupon he confessed all the sins that he remembered. Now within himself he had always leaned more to one party than to the rest, but he had never spoken of it, nor said one was right and the other wrong, but only in his innermost heart he had favoured it, and this he never confessed. So it came about that he died, and there was another man, who having confessed, had a vision, in which, being as it were in an ecstasy, he seemed to see the soul of the first man beside the throne of God, and beside him was the good angel and the bad who had followed him all the days of his life. Then he was presented before God, and God said, *Cuius est imago haec?* Whose soul is this? The devil answered, *Caesaris*, that is, It is mine. And God said: And why is it yours? And the devil answered: Because he has had party feeling in his heart, and that is against charity. So God spoke the sentence to his ministers: *Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris*

Caesari; render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Whereupon the devil at once laid hold on his soul and carried it to a warm abode.

The Rich Man's Troubles

RICH MAN, I CAN NEVER SEE you satisfied; now you are planning this way and now that. You give yourself no peace, and this because your soul is insatiable, it can never say to itself: Enough; it must always be hungry after more, always more. But I tell you that what you lay up for yourself is not riches, but something else—trouble, worry and sweat of the brow, while you are acquiring wealth, trouble, worry and grief if you lose what you have acquired, and trouble, worry and pain if you must leave behind what you have gained. But at all times trouble and worry.

There was once a man who, in order that his money should not be taken from him (and he had plenty of it, and was old) did with it what the cat does with her kittens. He hid it in one place to-day and in another to-morrow. So sometimes he put it under his bed, and sometimes he buried it in the stable, and sometimes he put it among the bread, and sometimes among the beans and sometimes among the corn. And finally he had moved it about so much that he didn't know where he had put it, so he went about looking for it and weeping. And what have you to cry about?

people said. And he did not want to say, either from grief or because he thought he had been robbed. Nevertheless he always hoped to find it. But when he was on the point of death, when he was clenching his hands in his last agony, oh, what grief was his then!

Yes, when death comes, it's not as if your money had been merely taken from you. Then you might think: Oh, it has been stolen, but it may be given back. Or if it was lost, because then you might hope to find it again, or if you couldn't get it back by hook or by crook, then you might at least set about collecting some more. No, when death comes, it is different. When you must leave, then the time comes for you to say: O my dear money, I cannot hope to have you any more. Alas! Alas! my dear money, how can I be parted from you forever!

VICE OF THE SHOPKEEPER IS that of hoodwinking the purchaser when he counts out change. For he counts it so fast that he completely confuses whoever is receiving the money. In greatest haste he cries: Here, here, take it, take it. One, two, three, five, seven, eight, ten, thirteen, seventeen, nineteen and twenty! And the poor silly woman, who hasn't much of a head on her, believes what you say, and takes what you give her. Then she gets home, and begins to count up

her change, ha'penny by ha'penny, and finds she is fourpence out. So she hurries back to the shopkeeper, and says: Look, I took back the money that you gave me, and when I counted it at home there was fourpence too little. Then the way of the shopkeeper is to reply: Oh, be sure that you haven't made a mistake in counting. Then she says: No, you have given me too little. For the love of God give me back the rest. But he says: No, you look carefully to see if you haven't dropped the money, or if there isn't a hole in your purse. And so he makes the poor woman bear the loss.

The Greedy Man

THE MISER NEVER HAS HIS FILL of money. The more he has, the more he wants. Do you doubt if I speak the truth? Listen, and I will prove it to you. *Bernardino:* Now, O miser, how much money do you want? *Avaro:* I want ten thousand florins. If I had ten thousand florins I would think myself comfortably off. *Bernardino:* Here they are, then. Take them. Have you got them? *Avaro:* Yes. *Bernardino:* Come now, what have you done with them? *Avaro:* Oh, I have spent them. And I need some more. There was a tenant of mine I lent a hundred to, then I spent some on cattle, and there was fifty for putting a house in order—Oh, more than fifty. *Bernardino:* Well, how much more do you want? *Avaro:* Oh, I need fifteen thousand at least. (You see his ideas

are getting big.) *Bernardino:* Here they are, then. Take them. What are you going to do with them? Have you decided? *Avaro:* Oh, yes. There is a house beside mine that I would do very well to possess. And between the two houses there's a plot of land. If I could have that, nobody would be able to get at me to do me any harm. The two houses would be closely joined.

And at once in this way and in that he has spent all the money and is racking his brains how to get more. *Avaro:* I must have some more capital. *Bernardino:* But why do you want so much? *Avaro:* Oh, if I had a certain amount more, I could be sure that was all I needed. *Bernardino:* Well, how much? *Avaro:* I couldn't do with less than twenty-five thousand. *Bernardino:* What would you do with all that? *Avaro:* What would I do with it? Well, to begin with, there's a certain castle that greatly attracts me. And I want to have a place by each one of the gates. You know I can't bear the fog. And so if it's foggy in one place I must have somewhere to go where it's clear.

And in addition he must have grand clothes and new fashions, which all amounts to saying that if he had a hundred thousand florins, still he wouldn't be content.

Scandal

YOU KNOW, WHEN A WOMAN IS about to say something evil about another how she always does it? She says: I had it from a neighbour, and she told me such-and-such about Mrs So-and-So. Then what does the woman who hears it say? She tells the story in a new way. She says: They are all saying such-and-such about Mrs So-and-So. The first woman speaks in the singular, the second in the plural. The third will doubtless add something more. She will say: Yes, I have heard such-and-such about Mrs So-and-So from a great many people. They say she is with child of Mr What's-his-Name. The fourth scandalmonger also has an improvement to make: Mrs So-and-So has had a child by Mr What's-his-Name. Yes, and by the time it comes to the fifth woman, she has borne him a whole family!

O accursed tongue, beware what you do with those words of yours. You have done more sins than could easily be believed. Think how many souls you have sent to the devil, and how many bodies you have put in danger of hell!

THE SCANDALMONGER HAS ALways a fair outward seeming, and his vileness hidden. Do you know how he behaves when he is on the point of slandering somebody? First he sighs and droops his head to earth, and seems

to speak much againſt his will. And when he speaks at laſt it is with a tear in his eye, as though only the good of humanity moved him to it. So that all who hear him think that he muſt be such a good man, and inside he is rotten. When he speaks he says: Oh, I have kept this to myself for such a time, and I never meant to tell it to anybody. Now, I can't keep quiet about it any longer. Of course, if I hadn't heard it from someone else, I would never have mentioned it. But since other people are repeating it, there can be no harm in my saying it too.

Scandalmongers who go slandering others and yet wish to keep themselves dark are like frogs. You know what frogs do? They say *qua, qua, qua, qua*, and I've often gone where they've been croaking, and when I've come to the ditch where they are, and am juſt going to ſtep down into it, they at once dive under the water, and don't make another sound. Juſt so does the scandalmonger. When he wants to defame, he croaks up *qua, qua*, and somebody, hearing himself called, hurries up to the sound, and says: Here I am, here I am! What is it? But the frog has disappeared. There's nothing there at all.

What the Great Lack

HEAR NOW THIS STORY OF A nobleman who was rich and in great estate. He had lands, and a great family, horses, servants, squires, sons and ornaments of silver, as behoves a mighty lord. And this signor, being with a close friend, said to him: Tell me. How do you think my affairs go? Well, answered the other. Said the lord: Come; tell me the truth. Do you think I lack anything? Yes, my lord, the other answered. What you lack is that people should tell you the truth. Because either through fear, or in order to please you, they never tell it you.

This I want to make plain to you, because it seems that everybody has lately taken a mighty oath to speak only to give pleasure. Therefore my friends, when you are in the hall of the great speak only the truth, and never say what is untrue just because the hearing of it may be agreeable.

I WANT THIS MORNING TO teach you how to pray. If you spin with a good heart, do you know that you pray with effect? Here is a piece of news for you: While you work you can pray, and not even be aware of it. And you who do your trade well and honestly, all the time you work, you pray. Do you make shoes? Do you make wool? Are you a carpenter

Warning to Siena

or a mason? Are you a smith, or what is it that you do? Whatever it is, if you do it well, you are praying all the time.

BEWARE, BEWARE, BEWARE, O people of Siena. Beware, for the devil is building up evil in many guises to fall upon us for our sins. The pestilence is coming, which will lay hold on you and you and you. The devil has set his eggs; they are ready for hatching, and only wait for the shell to break; and when it breaks the judgment of God will come forth from the egg. Do you know what these chickens are that will come out of the eggs that the devil has set? They are death in all its forms—the ravage of shops and houses within and without, the burning of homes, the burning of vineyards, one man killing another, the slaying of women, the slaying of children, taking little children and dashing them with their heads against the wall, the rape of your wives and daughters before your eyes, the treachery of one man against another, thieving one from another, and deadly quarrels, father with son, and brother with brother, so that no man may trust his fellow-man. And in the end such desolation will come that none will have any thought but to do his neighbour ill.

Therefore I say, beware, Siena, beware!

WERE YOU EVER AT VENICE? Sometimes there of an evening, there comes a little wind which goes over the face of the waves and makes a sound upon them, and

this is called the voice of the waters. But what it signifies is the grace of God, and the breath breathed forth by him. The little breeze—that is the word of God, which is full of the melody of his holy Spirit, and the waters are those who ſtay to give it ear.

YOU WHO ARE COLD AND dead, come to the fountain of life. O woman, in the morning when you come to the spring of life and teaching, when you come to the sermon, do not leave your husband at home in bed. Nor your son, nor your brother. But wake them up and bring them with you to hear that which, if they are dead, will give them life again.

, SIENA, YOU ARE FAIR; YES, fairer than Jerusalem. And you have peace; yes, more than had Jerusalem. You are set high; yes, Jerusalem was not so high. And I say to you, Beware, Beware! For as the sin of those peoples moved God to wrath, so I bid you beware that your sins do not move him. He waits and waits; and when he has waited and waited again, remember how he used Jerusalem, so that no stone stood of her buildings, and ruin was over everything.

O YOU KNOW HOW OUR MIND is when it cannot understand a thing that comes to it? It is like the sea when it is raging, or like a pool stirred up from the bottom. When you look into troubled water you cannot see what is in it. What must you do? You must wait until it clears. And when it is quiet again, you will

see it clear and beautiful, so that every little thing can be made out plain. So is your mind when it is turbid. You cannot see the truth that is hidden then. You must wait until it has become calm; then you will see everything in it clear, and can choose out the good and leave the evil aside. If you set yourself to do a thing when your mind is in travail it is not possible ever to do it well. Think! When the sea is raging is there any that would venture to set sail upon it? The sailor is tossed here and there, now up, now down, and wherever he goes there is always danger. So I say of one whose mind is in confusion. Not knowing what is good to do, he remains in the greatest perplexity and fear.

S THERE HERE AMONG YOU any blacksmith or goldsmith or maker of swords? When a man does penance he does to his soul what the sword-maker does to his blade. You know how when you pass his workshop, up by the street of the Tolomei you see them burnishing arms, and one holds the piece of wood and the other the blade, and then they drop a little powder on to the rusty place, and rub, rub, rub and burnish, and keep on at it until it is lovely and clean and bright as a jewel. Just so does the goldsmith with an old cross or chalice. He burnishes it, and then with his graver

Penitence makes it even fairer than it was before. So does the smith with his file, and all these by their art make things more beautiful than when they were new.

That is what penance does for our souls. It burnishes them and makes them bright and clean. So

does the file of abstinence and fasting, and the refiner and burnisher of penitence itself. And this penance, performed in perfect heart, and with burning zeal, makes the soul so splendid and shining and bright that it is a marvel.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SLANderer is? The slanderer is a poison, and when he speaks ill of a man it is as if he had bitten him, as might some poisonous beaſt. Do you know how the poisoner goes about his work? When he wants to give poison he does not give it pure, but mixed with some other thing, so that the victim takes it without knowing what he does. Juſt so does the slanderer. He gives the poison mixed with other words, juſt as I have told you. He says a man is wise, and slanders him at the same time; he says he is good, and slanders him at the same time. He says he is upright, and slanders him at the same time. He administers his poison in every way. An accursed slandering tongue is always raving. Do you know what it is like? It is like a mad dog. And what is a mad dog like? He has his mouth open, and is always raving to bite. The open mouth signifies that he is ever ready to speak evil, and that moſt times he speaks when he should be silent, and often holds his peace when he should speak. This is the way of the slanderer. His mouth is always bloody, since he delights always to feed on flesh and blood. How like slanderers are to the dogs that hang about a butcher's shop and when they see a ſtrange dog come they all gather round it, and smell it, and by their noses they can tell that it is not one of themselves. When they realise this they at once begin

Forbearance to Wives

to snarl and show their teeth, and when the newcomer begins to bark, they all rush upon it, and bite it here and bite it there, so that they almoſt tear it to pieces. Then they drive it out, as if they said: You are not one of us.

They do not so when one of their own kind comes. Then, when they have sniffed it, they embrace it, knowing that it is one of their own slandering company, and seem to say among themselves: He is one of us. And though he is not known to all, somebody who does know him takes him under his protection, and says: Come, ſtay here. For you are one of us. Do as we do.

H, HOW PRECIOUS IS THE FRUIT of a good woman. You have it written in the scriptures, *Ex fructibus eorum, cognoscetis eos*, By their fruits you shall know them. How do you know when a pear-tree is good—you know, a garden pear? By its fruit. And so with a vine, and a fig. You know them by their fruit; and so I say of all trees. So you will know by the fruit of a woman whether she is good or not. When a woman is good, and has children, that is the nobleſt fruit there can be in the world, if they are good. For you know this is the tree God planted, the nobleſt thing that could ever be. Oh, to see a fine boy-child! You never could see

a lovelier fruit. The tree, you know, was planted in so precious a place, that is the earthly paradise, and was set there by the hand of God himself. Yet there are many who do not even worry whether their children are boys or girls, and there are many who have children and do not value them at all. And when they see them do some childish folly, they don't know how to put up with it, so little discretion have they.

Forbearance to Wives

Some there are who can far better suffer a hen, that lays them a fresh egg every day, than their own wives. And sometimes the hen breaks a jug or a cup, and yet they don't get angry with it or beat it, through their desire not to miss its fruit, that daily egg. Oh foolish creatures men are, that they cannot suffer a single ill word from their wives, that bear them such more noble fruit. For as soon as your wife speaks a word that doesn't please you, Up! you take your stick, and begin covering her with blows. And the hen that clacks the whole day long and never ceases—you have any amount of patience with her, simply for the sake of having that little egg. Many fastidious men, seeing their wives sometimes not so neat and dainty as they should be, at once belabour them for it, and yet you see the hen drop filth even on your table, and you have patience with her. Consider, O hasty man, consider the noble fruit of your wife, and bear with her. It is not right to beat her for every little thing.

Borrowed Plumes

YOU WOMAN WHO ARE ALways following new fashions, did you ever hear the story of the crow who dressed herself in plumes borrowed from all the other birds? Oh, she was a beauty! She had fairly changed

her suit! And what happened? The birds came and gathered round her, and every one took back her own feather, and so she was stripped. Well, apply that at home. O woman, who wear so much that is not your own, if you gave back your wool to the sheep on whose back it grew, and the silk to the worms that span it, and the curls that you wear to the dead to whom they belonged and the false hair to the horses' tails; if you

gave back to its owner everything that you have taken for your adornment, then you'd be finely ſtripped! Then you'd have less gew-gaws and fandangles than you now have, and mark my word! you'd have less sins!

The Shamelessness of Fashion

OUR SLEEVES ARE SO LONG, O vain woman, that when it rains you can put one over your head. These sleeves come ſtraight from the devil, because it is he that teaches you to make them so. O women, when I see you with these great sleeves of yours, so wide and long, with so much cloth in them that when you walk they hamper your arms so that you can hardly bear them, and when you throw them over your shoulders again they hamper you there, then, think I, what squandering of your ſubſtance, and, oh, what squandering of your souls! And some there are that have altered them, so that they shouldn't be such a nuiſance, by ſplitting them from end to end, so that the arm shows through. Why don't you go naked altogether? Oh, oh, oh, the shamelessness of woman! Is there nothing that will make you blush? Is there ever a harlot you have seen with new clothes, that you didn't run to copy her fashions? Why do you copy her, unless because you wish to appear a harlot yourſelf? She, and all her fashions, come ſtraight from the devil.

Warning to Evildoers

LL THE DEEDS THAT WE DO are visible to God. Let a man lurk in secret as much as he will, God ſtill sees every act he does. Therefore if you sin, beware, for the judgment of God is at hand. You know the way of the reaper. He takes his scythe in his hand, and with it sweeps round and round and round. Alas, alas! Siena. When the reaper comes to reap, beware, I say. For when he has cut down a little, he sweeps round with his scythe in a new place, and cuts down more, and when that is lying on the earth, he looks round again for that which is ſtill ſtanding. He looks to eaſt, to weſt, to south, to north. You see that on every side he has reaped, save only here. Therefore I say, Beware, Siena, Beware. For you are more tardy and slow to righteousness than any other land. Beware leſt the scythe reach you, and is sharpened for your deſtruction.

You know how after the gathering of the grapes the vines are ſtripped and nothing but a scarecrow remains in the fields. So will your vines be; they will be like a desolation, for war will have kept you from tending them; and if they are tended, then the fruit will be taken from them. The soldiers will leave your houses without a bench, without a door, without a window. The house itself will be half fallen in; like a ſtool crushed to earth, so will it all be.

Have you seen the little shelters they build for the

melons? They seem ſtrong and sound enough to live in as long as the fruit is ſtored there, but afterwards, when the melons are finished, they are like little broken huts. Ah, citizens, believe the word of one who has seen with his own eyes. For I have seen those parts of the country which, because of the war that had been there, have been left desolate and abandoned, and only three or four monks are left living there alone. There the wild beaſts come, as if they were in a foreſt; what was once the home of honourable people is now the abode of savage beaſts. *The City's Vices*

O city of Siena, beware, beware. Have you never known how, when the house of your neighbour is burning, they run to your house with water for safety's sake? Oh, my citizens, have you not eyes? If you have, open them, and mend yourselves while you may, so that your city does not become a hovel or a desolation.

ONE OF THESE NIGHTS I ROSE UP early, towards dawn, and I seemed to hear a cry of Fire, Fire, Fire! I said to myself: Something muſt be burning. And so I ſtood ſtill, with my ears ſtrained, and again, in another quarter, I heard a cry: Fire, Fire! And ſtanding there alone, thinking, but seeing nothing, I heard another cry, which sounded like Within! Within! in a voice that seemed to come from a cavern, a dark and muffled

voice. O Lord God, what could this mean? And ſtill loſt in wonderment, I heard a great cry from among the ſhops, Fire, Fire, Fire! Then fear and trembling grew in me, and everywhere, throughout the city, from men in their beds, from ſtables and from ſecret corners, came Fire, Fire, Fire! from the towers and the belfries came, Fire, Fire! and little by little the town was full of voices, all crying together, Fire!

Ah, me, do you know the meaning of my word? I think you do; but I tell you that if you have not now underſtood, the time is coming when you will. For if you do not mend your ways, God will punish you and chaſten you with the chaſtiſement that befits this sin. Yet I fear that water to you is like the water the blackſmith pours on his furnace. It but makes your evil fire burn fiercer.

SOMETIMES THE DEVIL COMES to the eaſt gate of the ſoul, with his offers of pleaſure, that is with the gift of proſperity; then comes the angel, and ſtands at the oppoſite gate with pain, and he ſays: Look well what you do. Take pleaſure where it is right, and leave the reſt. Do not fall into sin through the abundance of earthly goods. But the devil ſtill ſtands by the eaſt gate saying: Rejoice in the goods of earth. They are all yours. They are created for man to poſſeſs. Pay

no heed to him who says the contrary; eat, drink, sleep, array yourself, live splendidly, and take these pleasures while you can. But the angel by the other gate makes the soul so that the evil thought cannot enter into it. Keep out, he says. You shall not enter. And he helps the soul and gives it good inspiration, and thrusts the demon out.

Thus, not being able to enter by this gate, the devil tries to enter by the western gate, which signifies suffering, and he sends his persecutions. He sends infirmities of the body, he slays the children, he sends hail upon the crops, he drives off the cattle, and reduces a man's fortune to ruin and despair. And the angel of the east gate runs to succour the soul, and gives it courage to bear up for the love of God, remembering the passion of the Saviour, who suffered such pain for man's soul; and he puts it in the sufferer's heart to have patience and not to cry out upon God nor against anything that happens to him, saying and showing that those things are but transitory, and that, with patience, he will have his reward in glory. And so he confronts temptation: Go back, for also through this gate you shall not enter.

Then, when the temptation is passed, the devil would enter the southern gate of the soul, that signifies the hope of this world's goods—Pride and high estate and magnificence and setting oneself in a lofty and

Taking Leave of Siena

noble place. Then ſtraightway the good angel runs to the northern gate which ſignifies fear, and he begins to show the dangers in which a man ſtands who dwells so high, and the hate his fellows bear him, and he says: Do not so. Do not so. Let these things be. Do not hope in the goods of this world, for here nothing is ſtable. *Spera in Deo et fac bonitatem.* Hope in the Lord, and do good works. And so he says to his adversary: Go back, go back to evil. You are not fit to enter here. Thus the angel helps the soul, so that in no way it shall fall into sin through which it might come to lose God.

MY FRIENDS, YOU KNOW THAT you have had nothing from me, but everything from God. If I speak for myself then nothing that I say can be without fault, and so it muſt ever be if a man speaks out of his own mouth. You have not been aware of my faults, but myself I see them well, and I never preach to you without recognising my many failings.

But as much as I have told you about the health of your souls and the well-being of your city, that you can hold for sure and ſteady, for that I affirm, and confirm, and reconfirm, and eſtablish for you safe. Give your minds to it, for this is a surer way to live than you have followed in the paſt. And if one should

come after me, and say the opposite of what I have said, know that the devil is in him, and that he will lead you astray if you trust in him, for all his preaching will be against the word of Christ. Though I have faith in you, that you will not let yourself be moved by a light thing. Nevertheless do not trust him who comes to contradict my word, but stay always sure and steady on firm ground, having your mind turned ever straight to God.

Taking Leave of Siena

I thank the mighty lords of this city for the charity they have shown towards me and so towards every citizen. And I thank you all who have most humbly listened to my words and have shown me love greater than I deserve. And I would have you bear in mind that I have commended my soul to you that you pray God for me, as I will pray him for you.

To-morrow I think I will go away, and I do not know if we shall see each other again. May it be that I come back again to see you, or that I find you again or that some of you come to seek me out. But I think I am going into far countries, and when one goes far he returns late. Therefore for the love that I have borne and bear you, I pray you that you pray God for me, that he may give me grace to do his will and persevere in this my art, so that for the glory of God I may teach the people and put them in the way of God's commandments.

Taking Leave of Siena

Let it be then that you will say a *Pater Noster* and an *Ave Maria* for me every day, and I pray God to

enlighten us so with his grace that when we come to leave this life we may give up our souls clean and pure, so that God may lead us all straight to his blessed glory, to live with him and the shining saints *in saecula saeculorum.*

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